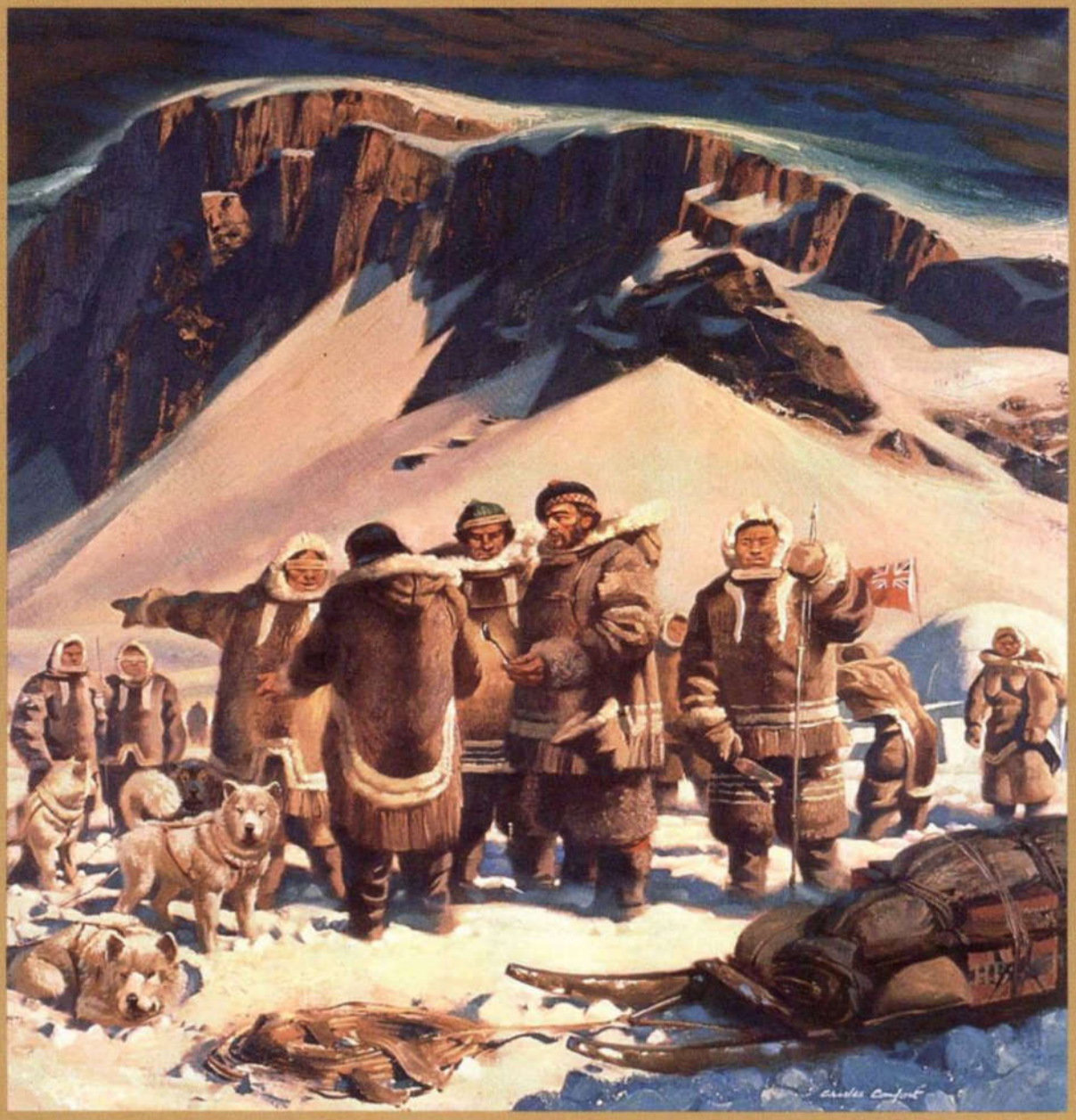
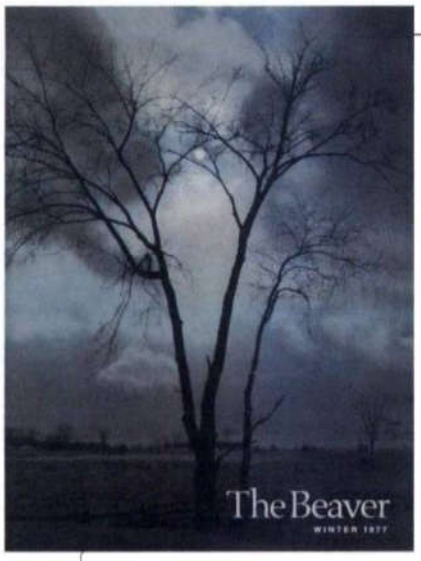
October / November 1993 $ 3.95

The Beaver

EXPLORING · CANADA'S · HISTORY

John Rae: Giant of the North
Canada's Olympic Heroines, 1928
Nellie McClung: Votes for Women





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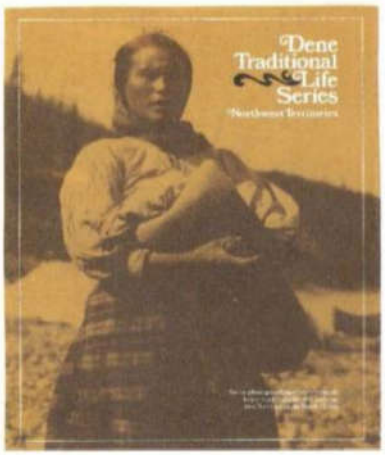

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Dr. John Rae at Repulse Bay, by Charles Comfort. HBC Collection.

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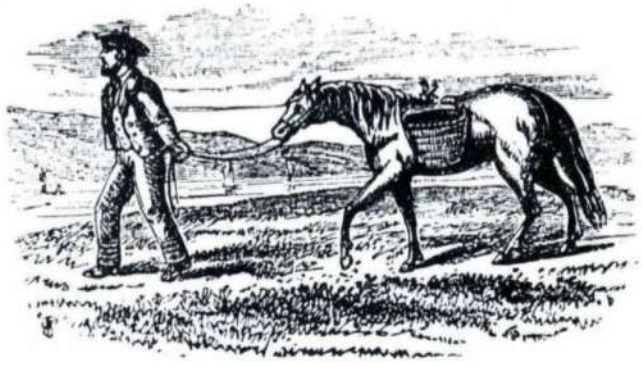


The Great Pedestrian

A large number of unsolicited manuscripts arrive at the editorial offices of *The Beaver* every month. About one in five has a covering letter from the author that begins with the familiar observation that Canada lacks "national heroes" and then goes on to list the well-known figures from the American pantheon, most of whom appear to have attained legendary status by fighting with Indians or robbing trains and banks. Why, our correspondents ask, do we not have similar Canadian giants for our young people to look up to?

To fill the gap, the author offers us an account of the life, times and unusual adventures of a remittance man who robbed several stores in the interior of British Columbia, married the daughter of an Indian chief and chased foxes on the plains of Alberta before striking it rich on the Trail of '98. Of course, we have already published that particular article, or something very much like it, in a previous issue.

Why do we have so few "national heroes" of the Buffalo Bill or Jesse James variety? Perhaps it is because we have had a different sort of history. An earlier generation of Canadians made much of dead British generals — James Wolfe and Isaac Brock — although poor Major General Roger Hale Shaeffe, who actually drove the invading Americans off Queenston Heights after Brock was killed, was universally ignored. Then, as the adulation of the generals faded, the politicians — The Fathers, Macdonald and Laurier — came into view, only to fade in their turn.

Looking back from our present vantage point, it might seem that the greatest struggles in Canadian history have pitted men and women against the conditions of climate and physical environment that characterize this Northern land.

Canada's "heroic" history, to a great extent, has not been about fighting Indians, killing Americans or robbing banks, although there are instances of all these things in our national chronicles. Our history has been, in part, the story of men and women striving against the forces of nature, a story of long and difficult journeys, of struggles to win a living from an often harsh and difficult land. Our ordinary heroes are men and women who made farms where there had been only trees; families who spent their first winters in Canada in mud huts; builders of towns; newcomers who came from half-way around the world and spoke no English or French; indigenous peoples forced to adapt to new ways of living; map-makers and trail-breakers who travelled vast distances through dangerous country infested with insects — lives of struggle and accomplishment, defeat and victory. The vast majority of these remarkable but unremembered Canadians are not named in the historical record. We know them only by what they left behind — their cities, towns and farms are their monuments. Their immortality is to be found in the endurance of their children's children.

There are a few individuals, however, who stand out from the crowd, who do things so far out of the ordinary that their names deserve special honour and remembrance. Such a man was Dr. John Rae who died in comfortable circumstances in London, England, one hundred years ago after a life of considerable adventure and discomfort in the Canadian North, and who was buried under the walls of a cathedral at Kirkwall in the Orkneys.

Although not technically a Canadian, John Rae nevertheless deserves an honoured place in the pantheon of Canadian "greats". He was one of us in spirit and nature and his story is quintessentially a Canadian story.

He was born in the rugged Orkneys off the coast of Scotland in 1813 and his childhood and youth on the hunting field and on the rough waters of Scapa Flow provided a rigourous training for a life of hardship and adventure in the Canadian North. (See page 4 of this issue).

He qualified as a medical doctor at Edinburgh in 1833 and in the same year he shipped as a surgeon on the Hudson's Bay Company ship *Prince of Wales*, sailing to Moose Factory on James Bay. When the ship returned to England the following year after wintering over, Rae stayed behind as post surgeon, writing later that "I saw that I should like the wild sort of life to be found in Hudson's Bay Company service."

He spent the next ten years at Moose Factory as surgeon and trader. The rough, outdoor life appealed to him. He made friends with the Cree, travelling with them and learning their methods of wilderness survival.

R.M. Ballantyne, the author, who knew him when they were both HBC men, would write of him: "He was very muscular and active, full of animal spirits, and had a fine intellectual countenance. He was considered, by those who knew him well, to be one of the

best snowshoe walkers in the service, was an excellent rifle-shot and could stand an immense amount of fatigue."

By 1844 Rae had caught the eye of Governor George Simpson and he was assigned to undertake, after suitable training, survey and mapping work along the uncharted Northern coastline. He travelled by canoe to Upper Fort Garry but, his instructor having died shortly after his arrival, he pushed on to Upper Canada on foot, covering the distance between Red River and Sault Ste Marie — about 1,200 miles — in two months, one of the great journeys in Canadian history. Rae was characteristically modest about his accomplishment. He described the trek as "two months of constant travelling, and at the end of it, the only man who had accompanied me the whole distance was found to have lost 26 lbs in weight (he was certainly rather fat when he started) whilst I had gained 2 lbs."

During the 1840s and 1850s Rae made four expeditions in the Canadian North, travelling over 10,000 miles, often on foot, and charting almost 2,000 miles of coastline. Like the Inuit and the Indians, who were his teachers, Rae and his party lived off the land, with Rae himself more often than not filling the cooking pot.

As the years went by, Rae continued to move up the HBC ladder, from chief trader to chief factor, but his heart was never really in the fur trade. In 1849 he wrote to a friend, "It is certain that I never was intended for a man of business and my avocations for the last 4 or 5 years have driven the little I did know about accounts and etc. quite out of my head."

His head was full of other things. He became an authority on birds and wildlife of the Northern regions and published papers on these subjects. He produced studies of icebergs, on the movement of boulders by ice, on exploration and on the native peoples. He was a man of action and a scholar. Later he would become a Fellow of the Royal Society, the British Society for the Advancement of Science and the Royal Canadian Institute.

His greatest accomplishments took place on his survey journeys in the Canadian Arctic and the great work he did there stands as his monument, but he obtained fame of another sort when he became the first to cast light on the mysterious disappearance of the Sir John Franklin expedition.

In April 1854 at Pelly Bay he learned from an Inuk of a party of white men who had died of starvation four years earlier on a river far to the west. Later he met Inuit at Repulse Bay who provided more information and sold Rae articles, including silverware, that had clearly belonged to members of the Franklin party. Rae's report caused a sensation. The Inuit had implied that the last survivors of the Franklin crew had resorted to cannibalism in their final despair. This was a suggestion that Victorian England could not accept. Men of the Royal Navy? Cannibals? Impossible!

Glenbow Museum

John Rae in the dress of a Cree Indian, by William Armstrong, 1862. From "No Ordinary Journey". (Review, page 50.)

Rae was dismissed by many as a cad who had "gone native" and there was criticism of his habit of travelling in the native manner and not in the gentlemanly way that had brought disaster to so many Europeans in the Arctic, including the Franklin party. Rae was grudgingly given the £10,000 reward for discovering the fate of Franklin. Subsequent investigations confirmed the validity of his report. Looked down on by men of the Royal Navy, Rae was unperturbed. He didn't think much of them either.

The Great Pedestrian retired from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1856, and settled briefly at Hamilton, Canada West. On one occasion he is said to have walked 40 miles to attend a dinner party in Toronto.

He settled in England after his marriage in 1860, returning briefly to North America to undertake survey work in connection with the overland telegraph. Returning to England, he lived on for another 30 years, publishing papers on his travels, contributing to scientific journals and offering advice on Northern questions.

He died, full of honours but still a figure of controversy, in 1893, in London. He was buried at Kirkwall, Orkney, close to where he began, the long walk over at last.

— **Christopher Dafoe**

DR. JOHN RAE

The year 1993 marks the centenary of the death of Dr. John Rae, the intrepid arctic traveller, Hudson's Bay Company trader and explorer, who, in 1854, was the first to cast light on the mysterious fate of the Sir John Franklin expedition.

Born in 1813 at Orphir in the Orkneys, Rae enjoyed a challenging boyhood in the rough climate and landscape of his native islands, training that would stand him in good stead in later life as a Northern traveller.

He qualified as a surgeon at Edinburgh in 1833, joining the Hudson's Bay Company in the same year.

From 1844 Rae was involved in exploration and mapping for the HBC in Northern Canada, making astonishing treks on foot and enduring great hardship. He was one of the first Northern explorers to adopt the travel methods of the Inuit, living off the land for survival.

He died in London, England, in 1893 and is buried at St. Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, Orkney, Scotland.

"Within a five minutes run of our house was an excellent grouse moor, to which after the 12th. of August, in half-holidays and after school hours in the evening, I often scampered with the aforesaid gun (about 24 bore) and our fine old pointer 'Carlo', and generally picked up two or three brace of grouse in a fine sportsmanlike manner . . . At this time I could not have been more than thirteen years old".

There is nothing unusual for a teenager to be thinking about the sporting joys that can follow the end of the schoolday, though few are as well placed as John Rae was with the schoolroom in his house and the moor almost on the doorstep.

John Rae had learned to shoot much younger than that — taking shore birds when he was not strong enough to support the weight of that little gun, but managed to poke holes for it in the drystone wall, just above shore areas where the birds congregated. In old age his recollection of Orkney was as a "paradise for boys". His memories were of shooting on shore and moor, fishing on loch and sea, but above all, the total freedom and self-reliance given by their 18-foot yawl *Brenda*. Father had released the vessel to the boys on strict conditions including maintenance of the boat and rigging in tip-top condition, but also including the safety clause "never to have the sheets fast" (a requirement that saved the young Raes on at least one occasion). In his autobiography Rae does not give adequate credit to his father who must either have trained the boys or else have arranged for their training. The degree of knowledge shown at Fort Confidence on Canada's Great Bear Lake (1850-51) when he personally cut out the sails and rigged two boats that had been built in readiness for ice break-up on the Arctic coast, could not be picked up casually.

In his youth John Rae had become not merely inured to bad weather, but positively revelled in pitting himself against it:

> . . . being out in the worst of weather — snowstorms in winter, rain and gales all the year round. Cared nothing for and felt no harm from being soaking wet either with salt or fresh water all day long — for a waterproof coat was never thought of.

His autobiographical writings stress hardihood and the pleasures of "roughing it". He was certainly very tough and so immune to illness that he once almost recommended a drenching as a cure for the common cold:

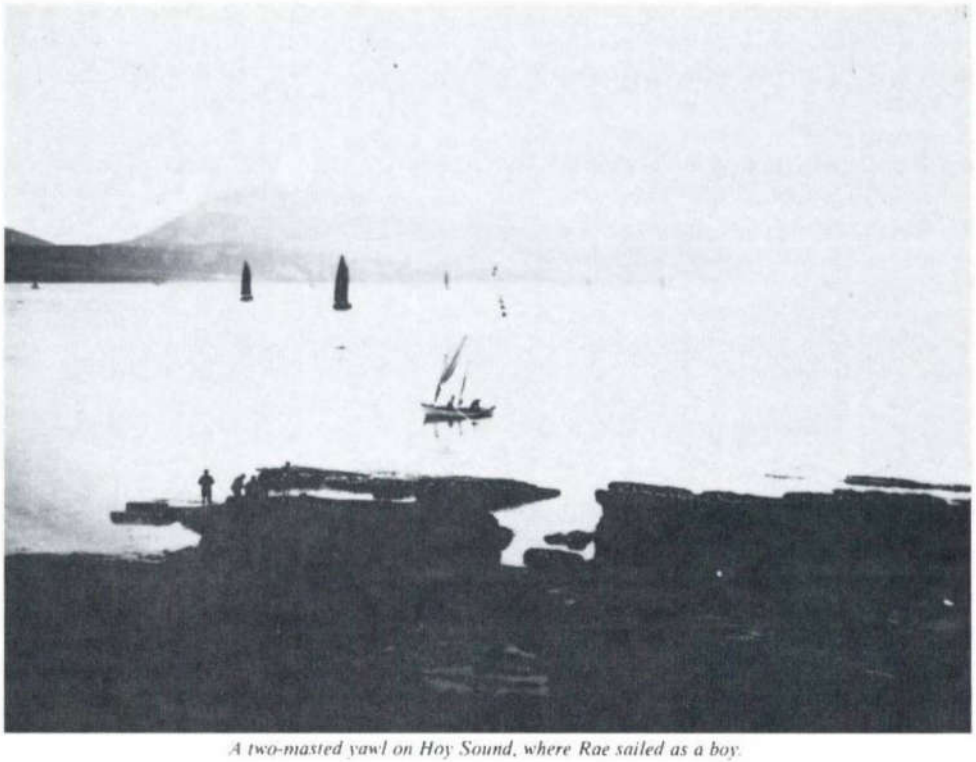
> I . . . was welcomed with some genuine Orkney Weather in the form of heavy Squalls of wind accompanied by lots of rain and snow against which I had to walk some fourteen miles from Kirkwall hither over most villainous roads . . . I, of course, got a complete soaking, but that and the exercise, I suppose, almost wholly removed my cold.

What he did not recall was that he always had the comfort of the big house behind him where sodden clothing could be changed for fresh and where he could thaw over a cheerful fire while awaiting a good meal. His autobiography shows scant interest in the back-up facilities and household arrangements. An old Highland nurse (presumably Jemima Mackay who was aged 30-40 in 1821) who frightened him with ghost stories and an eccentric tutor who kept pet eagles in cages and his father are the only adult members of the household he mentioned. He was wholly absorbed in his own physical pursuits and successes.

When he wrote his autobiography John Rae rejoiced in the memory of long solitary days with rod or gun, for this had given him relief from the humour and tricks of his older brothers and sisters. He was the fourth son and sixth child of John Rae, factor of the large Honeyman estate in Orkney, and of Margaret Glen from Argyll. There would be another two boys, one of whom died in infancy, and another girl before the family was complete. All were born in the three-storey Hall of Clestrain near the Orphir shore — a tall structure that dominates a wide area where even today the great majority of houses are on one floor. It had been built in 1769 by Patrick Honeyman of

The Education of an Adventurer

By James A. Troup



A two-masted yawl on Hoy Sound, where Rae sailed as a boy.

The Hall of Clestrain today stands vacant and forlorn in the fields of Orphir.

Graemsay as the laird's own house, but by this time his son, Sir William, was a leading judge who had landed interests in central Scotland. The palatial Smyllum Park had been erected on his expanding estate near Lanark. He retired to it from the bench in 1811. The handsome house in N.W. Orphir, near to the border with Stenness parish, with its enclosed fields and gigantic walled garden became home to the estate factor — an ideal situation with a fine sheltered bay just below the house. There was the noust for hauling up the boat; there was the sailhouse for drying their sails and housing the boat's gear.

The fortunate survival of the census records for 1821 gives a snapshot of conditions in Orphir. For the historian there are two unfortunate omissions — no return of acreage was required nor was any count made of horses. Other farm animals were listed and those implements which were of modern design. Of 140 agricultural holdings less than one-third possessed improved ploughs. Even fewer had a cart. Clestrain not only had three iron ploughs and five carts, but had rejoiced in one of the earliest threshing mills in Orkney. (In 1814 there had been only one in the county.) Those who had boats could supplement their diet with fish, or sell the surplus, but only one household in six was in this category. Even allowing for four men working a boat together this is a low proportion. The fish caught were sillocks and cuithes (young and mature coalfish) and dogfish, which were essential for their oil, but whose flesh was also enjoyed. The parish has a long sea coast bounding the shores of Scapa Flow which became famous in two world wars this century as the major naval base for the British fleet and also as the graveyard of the German fleet in 1919. With just 23 boats in the parish (26 if one includes the small island of Cava where each farm of necessity possessed a boat) only a minority of Orphir youngsters would have any chance of the seafaring enjoyed by the young Raes. The parish was poor. There had been an attempt to create a made road in place of a beaten track, but it remained unfinished because of "the poverty of most of our contributors compelling them to withdraw their subscriptions". The condition of local roads helps explain the shortage of carts. Peats from the hill and grain for the mill would be carried on horseback, in panniers slung from wooden clibber saddles.

As factor the Rae's father had a considerable estate to administer. The kernel of it was the small island of Graemsay, rather more than a third of the parish of Orphir and almost all of the neighbouring parish of Stenness; but there were pockets elsewhere in the Mainland of Orkney and even in the North Isles. He talked to Sir Walter Scott of 300 tenants in his care, each paying a mere £7 rent, and complained that they

did not follow his example. Scott was one of a distinguished company who were entertained at Clestrain in 1814. He admired Rae's farm with its pattern of neat tidy fields and skillful rotation of crops including fodder crops like turnips and hay for the stock. Hall of Clestrain was unusual in that its fields were enclosed right to the shore whereas most coastal lands were kept in run-rig and were totally unfenced so that "after harvest all cattle, sheep, horses, swine, and geese roamed at large over the arable lands". Scott was pleased with the dual purpose horses that were available to take them to see the archaeological sites of the district. These were Galloways, imported from Rae's native Lanarkshire — strong enough for agricultural work, but not too bulky for comfortable riding when travelling to visit estate farms. Rae bred from them and obtained excellent prices for his colts. Yet, Rae had described himself to Scott as a factor who had failed to inspire his tenants to follow the new methods except in the growing of potatoes. The 1821 census bears this out. Apart from Clestrain there was just one other farm in the parish which was practising the new methods of the Agricultural Revolution. This is not wholly surprising. Progressive farming cannot be an end in itself; it needs to make a profit and therefore requires assured markets. In Orkeny's climate, grass is the best crop to grow; but without being sure of selling the resultant cattle and sheep for good prices tenants could not take the risk of moving from subsistence farming. Steam navigation, with its guarantee of rapid arrival of stock at Aberdeen in good marketable condition, did not come to Orkney until 1834. Until then the wise farmer simply grew the oats and bere that he needed to feed his family.

John Rae junior had been fortunate indeed. His leisure time activities nurtured resourcefulness and self-confidence and made decision-making second nature. Life was quite different for the sons of tenant farmers. Brought up on tiny farms they knew shortages and hardship. Even the young Raes had a learning-gun so

Farmhouse on North Ronaldsay, a timeless scene that Rae might recognize.

old and worn that it exploded in the blacksmith's hands as he tested it after a repair. Most youngsters from Orphir lived in poverty that would deny them any such luxury. The big house could expect its peats to be delivered as part of the rent and could claim labour days from tenants and their children at busy times of year as well as rent in crop and money. Part of this belonged to the factor though the greater share was for the laird after being converted into money. The factor also had the fairly substantial salary of £80 a year. The tenant farmer, on the other hand, had to exist on his crop and anything he had to sell like peats, a beast or two, and smoked geese which were regarded as one of the delicacies of Orkney. Their homes were simple two-roomed cottages with a space for cattle at one end.

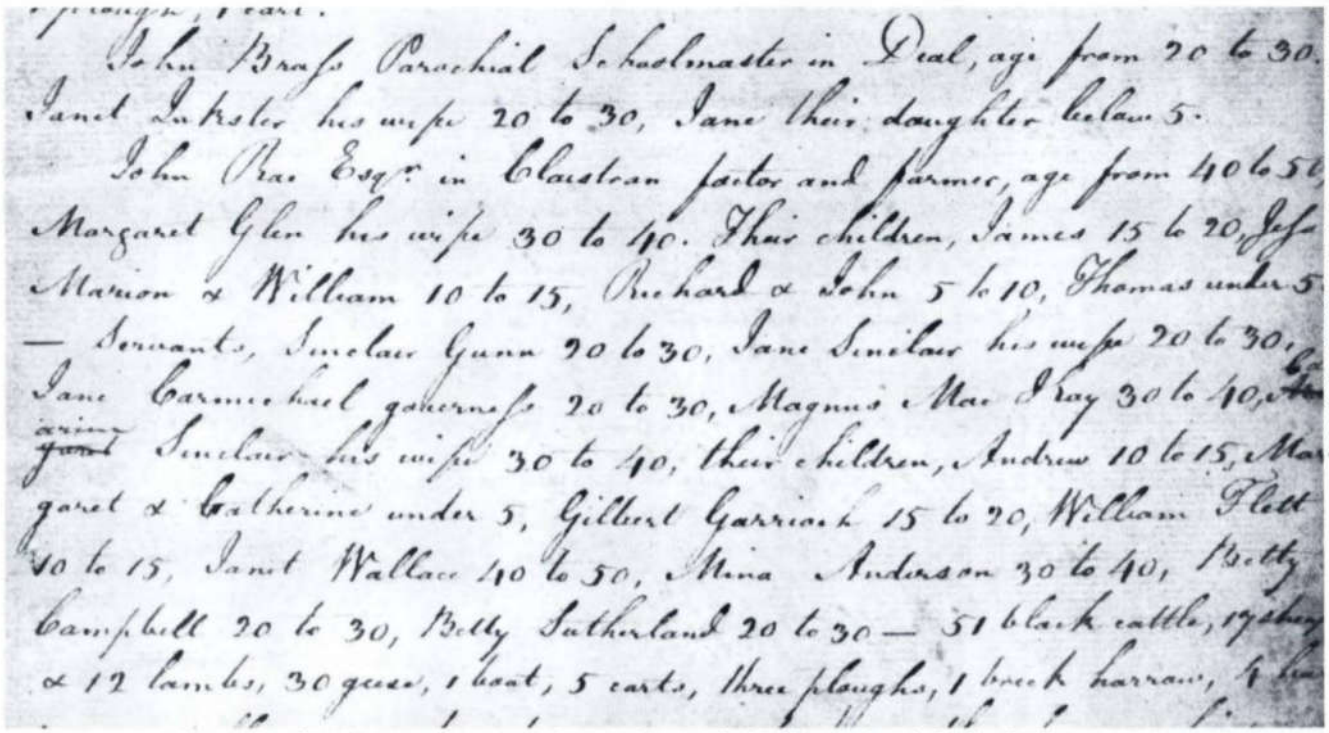
Smoke from the open fire billowed round the house till it found its way out through the wide lum. Possibly beneficial when one considers that internal plaster was likely to include cow dung. They had little furniture and few clothes.

John Rae was lucky: he was born into affluence. The children had a privileged existence with private education. There was a resident governess and as the boys grew older a succession of tutors who were probably employed for only part of the year. Two elder brothers appear in Sir George Simpson's Character Book as having "tolerably good Education" — very considerably better than Adam Snodie (a slightly earlier Orphir man in Hudson's Bay Company employ and product of a local school) who was "an excellent Trader and tolerable Clerk, but deficient in Education". John's own education equipped him to go to Edinburgh to study medicine; but its quality is indicated too by the reading matter that he took to the

Dr. John Rae in later life, posing with some of the Franklin relics he recovered in the Canadian North in 1854 on his long journey in search of news of the last expedition. Rae died in England in 1893 and was buried at Kirkwall, Orkney.

Arctic, including a complete Shakespeare in very small print. He left for Edinburgh at the age of 16. By that age most Orphir children were well-acquainted with toil — as casual labourers in Stromness or Kirkwall, as farm hands or kelpers, as quarrymen winning roofing slates for shipping away, or possibly sailing as "greenmen" aboard a whaling ship of Hull or of Aberdeen.

When John was about six years old his father was appointed as the Orkney agent of the Hudson's Bay Company with responsibility for recruiting suitable labour, attending to the private orders of Orcadian workers on the Bay and handling their bank balances. This demanded his periodic presence in Stromness. Far better to cross two and a half miles of sea in his own boat, crewed by some of his sons, than to travel six



By permission of the Orkney Presbytery of the Church of Scotland

Extract from the 1821 census, listing the inhabitants of the Parish of Orphir, including the family of John Rae, senior.

and a half miles by poor roads where "till some attention is paid to the constructing and repairing of public roads, wheel carriages can never come into general use", crossing the ill-maintained and dangerous Brig of Waith en route. Especially when he could step aboard a yawl in his own natural harbour in Orphir and sail to the house he had bought in a prime site on the waterfront of the bustling little town of Stromness. The HBC flag would continue to be raised over the same premises as those used by the first two agents of the Company in Stromness. He had much other business there; for instance, that was where his blacksmith lived; farm produce would be marketed and essentials purchased through Stromness merchants. As yet there were no banking facilities so far north and he dealt with the Edinburgh firm of Sir William Forbes, James Hunter and Co. A fortunate choice: it was one of the few merchant banking houses of the age to escape bankruptcy. These occasional visits to Stromness would be likely to provide his famous son's earliest recollection of racing the pilot boats out into Hoy Sound as the boys filled in time till father was ready for home:

> The boats of these men were longer than ours and built especially for speed under either oars or sail. . . . There was tremendous rivalry between us boys and these brave and experienced boatmen; we had no chance with them in fine weather . . . but whenever it blew hard and the sea was especially rough we never lost an opportunity of racing; and generally went ahead much to the chagrin of our big opponents and to the gratification of the boys.

During the century and a half since the young Raes ran to the hill at the end of lessons agriculture has banished the closer wilderness. No longer could John Rae run to heather moorland in five minutes; but the wild ground is still no great distance away. By the shore much of the dry stone dyke still stands where as a youngster he learned to shoot; one can still take a small boat into the bay, but the sailhouse is in ruins and the noust overgrown; and, alas, pigeons fly through the missing windows of the fine old house and nest in what were once stylish and commodious rooms. Had they dared to approach so close in his lifetime Dr. John Rae would have given them very short shrift. ♦

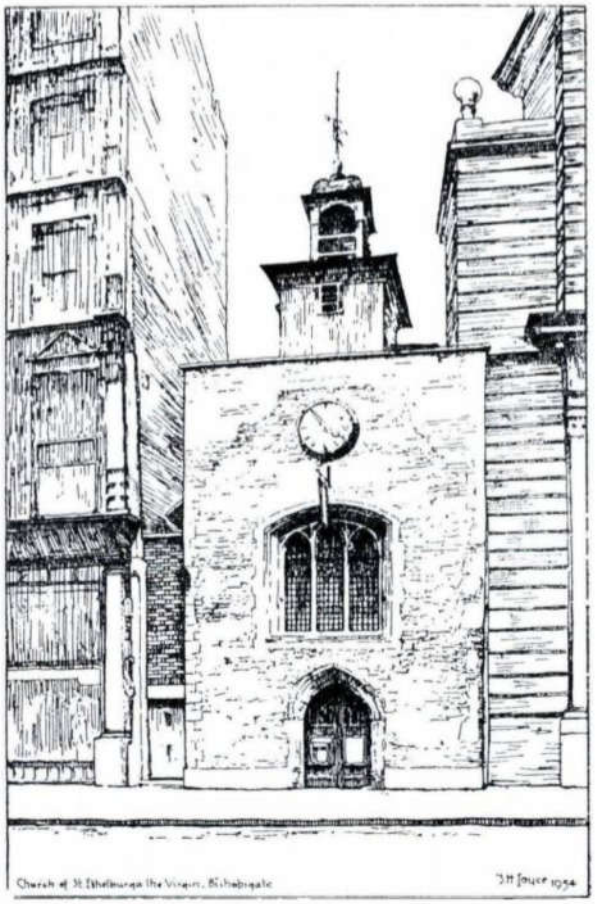
James A. Troup of Stromness, Orkney, was for 28 years Principal Teacher of History at Stromness Academy. He writes: "My particular field of interest has been the connection of Orkney with the 'Nor Wast' — the term used here to cover both Hudson's Bay Company service and also whaling on the west side of Greenland". He is editor of "The Ice Bound Whalers" (Kirkwall, 1987).

St. Ethelburga the Virgin, Henry Hudson and the IRA

By ANNE MORTON

On the morning of Saturday 24 April 1993, a one-ton bomb, made of ammonium nitrate fertilizer, fuel and a detonator packed into a truck, exploded on Bishopsgate in the City of London. Edward Henty, a photographer for the *News of the World*, was killed. He had heard from his paper that an IRA bombing was expected and was standing a few yards from the truck when it exploded. He would have celebrated his 12th wedding anniversary on the Sunday.

Injuries were sustained by 44 people and the cost of damage to buildings in the business heart of the United Kingdom has been estimated at £350 million, as high as the cost of the Baltic Exchange bombing which had devastated the City on 10 April, 1992.



With the City once again looking like a war zone, perhaps nothing caused as much outrage as what had happened to the tiny, medieval church of St. Ethelburga the Virgin within Bishopsgate. The truck had been parked just outside St. Ethelburga's and at first it was feared that a church which had survived the Great Fire of London, the Blitz and the Baltic Exchange bombing had been almost totally destroyed and that there was nothing left of what one commentator called "one of the jewels of the City of London" but the back wall.

St. Ethelburga's has a special place not only in the history of London but also in the history of Canada, the United States of America and the Hudson's Bay Company. This will be the third article the Company's magazine, *The Beaver*, has published on the little church.

The Company's link with the church has nothing to do with St. Ethelburga but as it is her church (probably her only church at that), she deserves at least a mention. Ethelburga (whose Saxon name, Aedilburh, is not much flattered by the English tongue) was the sister of St. Erconwald, Bishop of London, who appointed her the first Abbess of the Benedictine Abbey at Barking in Essex. Her holiness and that of her abbey was witnessed by events both before and after her death, which occurred in 675. One story that St. Bede tells in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* is of a Saxon noblewoman who had lost her sight and prayed for healing in the abbey's burial ground:

> Rising up from her prayer, before she went out of the place she recovered the benefit of the sight that she sought: and she that had been led thither by the hands of waiting-maids returned home joyfully, walking freely on her feet by herself; so that it might seem that she lost the light of this world only for this end, that she might show by her healing how great the light and what grace of mighty working is that Christ's saints have in heaven.

The earliest documented reference to the parish of St. Ethelburga's is in a deed of the year 1250. The present church was built about 1430, incorporating stonework from a much earlier period, hence its claim to have stood on the same site for more than seven centuries.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the church is its size. It is only about 60 feet long, 30 feet wide and 30 feet high. The parish has never been a wealthy one and its history has been remarkably uneventful — with two exceptions. One is that John Larke, the Rector from 1504 to 1542, was executed at Tyburn in 1544 for refusing to acknowledge the supremacy of the king in things spiritual. A painting of the Blessed John Larke was hung in the church on the 400th anniversry of his death.

The second event worthy of remark in the annals of St. Ethelburga's took place on 19 April, 1607. It was recorded by one of the participants, a Jacobean seaman named John Pleyce:

> Anno 1607, April the nineteenth, at St. Ethelburge in Bishops Gate street, did communicate with the rest of the parishioners these persons, seamen, purposing to goe to sea four days after, for to discover passage by the North Pole to Japan and China. First, Henry Hudson, master, Secondly, William Colines, his mate. Thirdly, James Young. Fourthly, John Colman. Fiftly, John Cooke. Sixtly, James Beubery. Seventhly, James Skrutton. Eightly, John Pleyce. Ninthly, Thomas Baxter. Tenthly, Richard Day. Eleventhly, James Knight. Twelfthly, John Hudson, a boy.

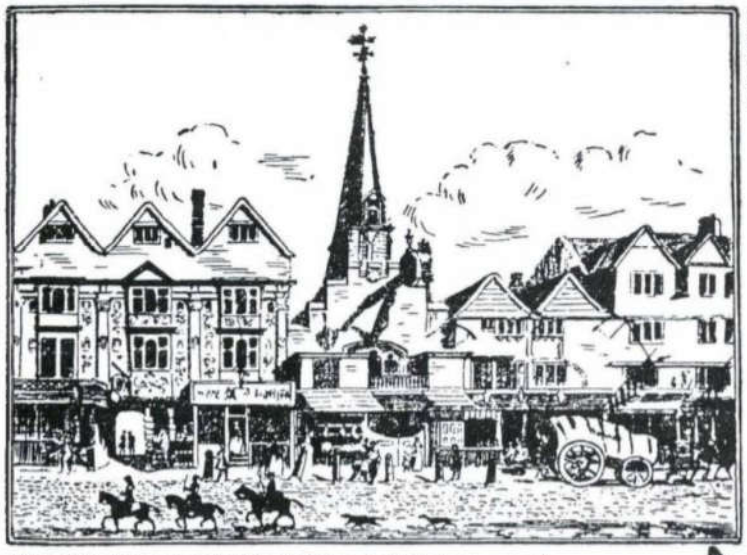
Hudson's communion at St. Ethelburga's is the first event of which we have definite knowledge in the life of the man who his biographer Llewelyn Powys called that "possessed sea-captain, who sailed to the North, and sailed to the East, and sailed to the West in his endeavour to find a passage through the ice-bound ramparts of the planet itself", and of whom his contemporary Captain John Smith said, ". . . the bounds of America doth stretch many thousand miles: into the frozen parts where of one Master Hutson did make the greatest discoverie of any Christian I knowe of . . ."

Strangely considering the magnitude of his exploits as a navigator and seaman and considering too that Canadians cannot summon up in their minds the shape of their country without being compelled to think of his name, Henry Hudson is a man about whom we know almost nothing, apart from the four voyages that made him famous. Those interested in knowing more about these voyages might wish to read an excellent new book by Donald S. Johnson, *Charting the Sea of Darkness: The Four Voyages of Henry Hudson* (International Marine, 1993) but even a summary version gives some idea of what he attempted and what he achieved.

HBC Collection

The Henry Hudson window, for which the Hudson's Bay Company donated 500 guineas in 1928, was a casualty of the April 1993 IRA bombing.

In his first voyage of 1607 in the *Hope-well* on behalf of the Muscovy Company he tested the theory that if one sailed far enough north one would find an easy passage east to the Orient. Hudson sailed to within 600 miles of the Pole and at least was able to return to his backers with news of the potential value of the Spitzbergen whale-fishery. In 1608, again in the *Hope-well* and again on behalf of the Muscovy Company he sailed as far east as Nova Zembla searching for a way into the Kara Sea. Blocked by ice, he turned west and set out to seek the North-West Passage until forced to turn back by a mutinous crew. In 1609, on behalf of the Dutch East India Company, sailing in the *Half Moon*, he again made an attempt on the North-East Passage which was defeated by stormy weather in the White Sea. Instead of returning to Holland, he set sail across the Atlantic, explored the American coastline from Chesapeake Bay to Penobscot Bay, and then entered what is now New York harbour and sailed up the river which bears his name as far as the present city of Albany.



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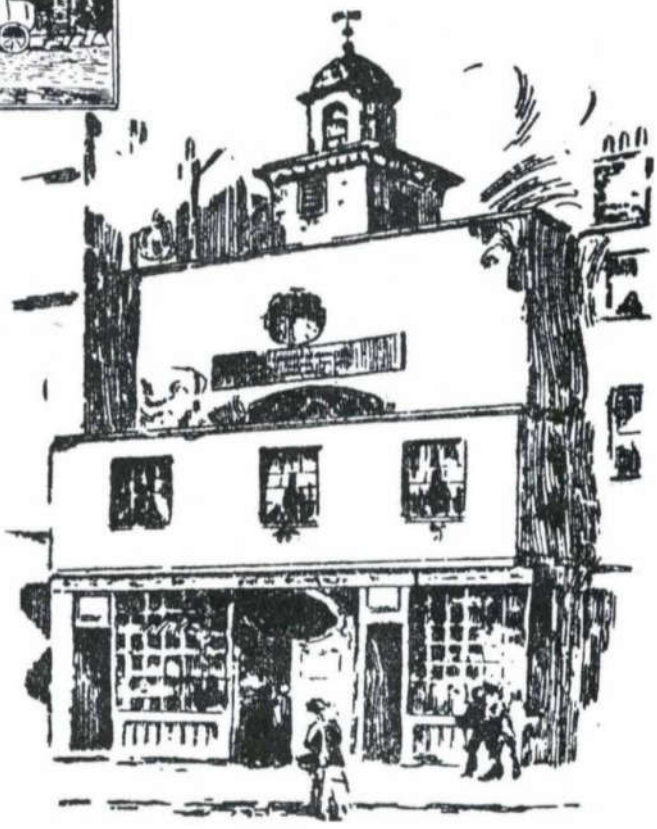


Above: The church and adjoining buildings in the late seventeenth century. The steeple was later removed. The church as it looked from the early eighteenth century until early in the twentieth (below right).

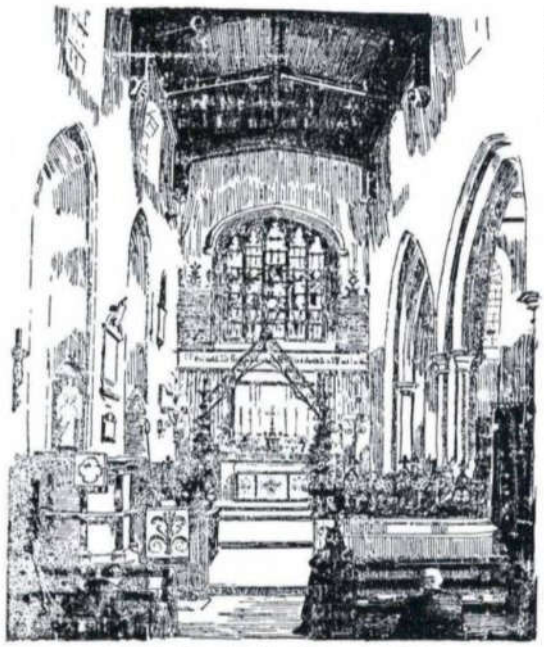
The next year, with the backing of a group of independent merchants, he sailed in the *Discoverie* hoping to find the North-West Passage by way of what the Elizabethan sea captain John Davis had named the "Furious Overfall", the tidal overfall at the entrance to Hudson Bay that had sounded to Davis "lothsomly crying like to the rage of the waters under the London bridge." The *Discoverie* sailed through Hudson Straits and on into James Bay, overwintering near the mouth of the Rupert River. After a wretched, scurvy-ridden winter, the crew, apparently fearing that Hudson intended to continue the search for the Passage, put Hudson, his son John and seven other crew members in the *Discoverie*'s shallop and left them to their fate. One of the mutineers said that he would "rather be hanged at home than starve abroad" but in the event none of them was hanged; their knowledge of the route to the west was too valuable. For, although Hudson's last voyage had not found the North-West Passage, and had ended in his death, it had opened up for the English that sea-route to Western Canada which the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay were to so successfully and profitably exploit.

Yet we know so little of the man who did so much, other than that he was an Englishman who lived in London, that he may have been descended from John Hudson, alderman in the City of London in 1555, and that he had a wife named Katharine with whom he had three sons, Oliver, Richard and John. We do not know where or when he was born or baptized; we do not know where, or even if, he was buried. If we wish to stand in a place where we know he stood before us, there is only St. Ethelburga's.

Yet Hudson's connection with the church might have remained no more than a curiosity noted in a guidebook if it were not for Dr. W.F. Geikie-Cobb, Rector from 1900 to 1941. Dr. Cobb loved his church and its history. He was keen both to promote it (in his day St. Ethelburga's had its own printing press which busily churned out little booklets celebrating the church) and to adorn it. It was he who turned the old burial ground at the back of the church into a garden, complete with goldfish pond, fountain and *loggia* in which to shelter from inclement weather. And it was under his aegis that the interior of the church was restored (1911-1922) by Sir Ninian Comper with a sensitivity

that gave it the look and feel it would have had in the sixteenth century.

For the rector of a not wealthy parish, Henry Hudson, a major figure in the history of four nations — England, the Netherlands, the United States of America and Canada — was a great gift. Dr. Cobb set his heart on having a Hudson memorial window installed in the church. (In the end there were to be three Hudson windows, all by the Arts and Crafts designer, Leonard Walker; a fourth by the same artist was dedicated to the memory of Dr. Cobb in 1947.) Dr. Cobb approached The English-Speaking Union, whose object was "To draw together in the bond of comradeship the English-speaking peoples of the world", in other words, the people of the Empire and the people of the United States of America. Dr. Cobb wrote the ESU in 1919 suggesting that it might imitate the example of the Harvard Society which had donated a window com-

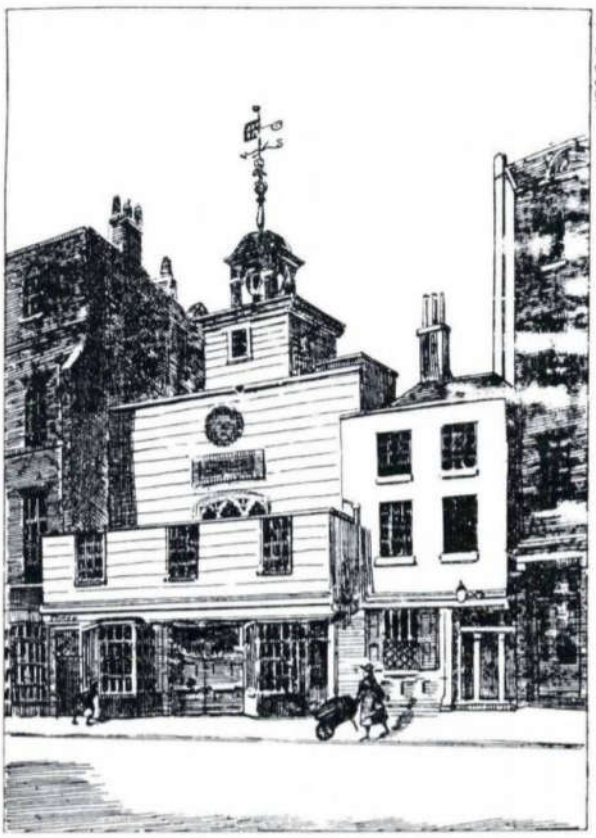


HBC Collection

St. Ethelburga's Church, interior, 1860.

memorating John Harvard to Southwark Cathedral by raising from its members the £500 "more or less" needed for a Hudson memorial window in St. Ethelburga's.

It was in response to the appeal from the ESU that in April 1919 the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company donated £25 for the window. From this small beginning was to grow a warm and affectionate relationship between the great company and the little church. In November 1927 the Company moved into its new head office, Hudson's Bay House on Bishopsgate. This large and handsome building stood



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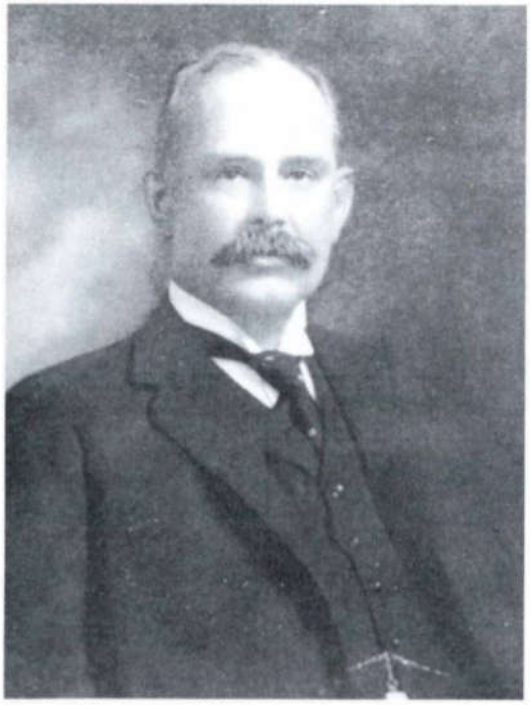
St. Ethelburga's Church, circa 1810.

right beside St. Ethelburga's. (Now named, with an equally Imperial resonance, Indo-Suez House, it came through the bombing of 1993 relatively unharmed, apart from the loss of all its doors and windows.) The acquisition of the Company as neighbours appears to have coincided with some crisis over the funds for the windows. No documentation of Dr. Cobb's approach to the Company has been found but possibly the money problems had something to do with the fact that the one window of 1919 had become three by 1928. In any event at their meeting of 13 March 1928, the Governor and Committee agreed to contribute "approximately £500" to pay for the window, which was unveiled only a few weeks later on 19 April, the anniversary of the communion. The minutes show that the Board had a pretty hazy idea of what the window it was donating was about for they explain that the window was to commemorate Hudson's communion "prior to setting out on his voyage of discovery to Hudson's Bay." When the Governor, Charles Sale, came to sign the minutes he crossed out "Hudson's Bay" and wrote in "Hudson River." (He had it straight by the time he gave his speech at the unveiling.)

The donation the Company made to the church turned out to be 500 guineas (£525). This was a most



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Charles Sale, Governor, The Hudson's Bay Company, 1925 - 1931.

generous gift. As an exmample of what such a sum meant at the time, the Company's librarian and first archivist, Richard Leveson Gower, was to receive a raise in April 1928 which gave him an annual salary of £300. But then, Charles Sale was a generous man. He was also a man who took great pride in the history of his Company and his country and one who appreciated old buildings. Both the Company buildings in London built in the 1920s — Beaver House and Hudson's Bay House — paid homage to the styles of the era in which the Company was founded. It was inevitable that Sale should come to cherish St. Ethelburga's.

The records of the planning for the dedication ceremony are preserved in the Company's archives and they still breathe a spirit of innocent enjoyment and that thoroughly English talent for ceremony. A plan was drawn up to arrange the seating in the tiny church (the Press were to be stowed in the Lady Chapel); parking, already a problem in the City, was considered and chauffeurs bringing passengers from the West End were, we learn, to be allowed by the police to park "for a short time in Camomile Street"; the Governor wrote personal letters of invitation to the more prominent guests; he also undertook to provide the flowers, along with his wife, daughter and gardener to arrange them; and above all, he worked on his speech. It is in a draft of this speech that St. Ethelburga's is called "this dear old church", which was changed to the more seemly but less fond "this ancient church" in the final version.

Given that the subject of the window did not give a Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company much to work with, Sale did a fine job. The speech is a dignified and moving one, which still holds up today. It ends:

> While we know so little of Henry Hudson, this at least we know, that he had Courage, Faith and Hope. In his Faith he knelt before this altar three centuries ago, in his Courage he set out anew undismayed by failure, not once but three times more. His Hope we gather not only from the name of his first ship, the *Hope-well*, but from the names which he gave to the points at which he touched — Hope's Advance Bay, the Mount of God's Mercie, the Land of Hold with Hope and the Isles of Good Fortune. In the circumstances we think of him not in failure nor as one who died in a vain cause, but as the bearer of an imperishable name whereof are witnesses the representatives here today of the English Government, to which Henry Hudson owed allegiance, the representatives of the great nations of France, the United States and of Canada, of Denmark, the Netherlands and of Newfoundland, all of whom are in one way or another linked in history with the four voyages I have described — as well as representative members of the great interests of the City of London engaged in carrying on that traffic and intercourse overseas which it was the ambition of Henry Hudson to promote.
>
> And now, in the name of the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the God of our fathers and of all mankind, and in honour of Henry Hudson, the Navigator, and of his Courage, Fortitude and untimely death, we dedicate this window, on behalf of the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay, and entrust it to the care and custody of the Rector and Churchwardens of this ancient church.

The window which inspired this speech shows (or did show) the communion of 1607 at the bottom and above, Henry Hudson and the *Half Moon*. Hudson is depicted as a man in the prime of life, with the proud confident air of one who feels sure that the North-West Passage will be just around the next iceberg. It is a wonderful image to set against that better known one of the mad-eyed haggard creature in a boat, staring at the death to which his dreams have brought him.

Dr. Cobb was effusive in his thanks — "St. Ethelburga's will regard itself as the chapel of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Church's Rector should be the Company's chaplain — and delighted with the window which he claimed, rather poignantly as it now seems, would be "a perpetual joy to all who use our church."

The friendship between church and Company came into play once more over the second Hudson window. In December 1928 Charles Sale wrote to the Company's New York agent, Bruno Weyers, explaining that while the money for one of the remaining windows had been raised from subscribers in England, the Rector wished to raise money in the United States for the window which was to show Hudson on the Hudson River. As the window was to cost £600 or $3,000, Sale suggested that 300 people might give $10 each so that the window should be "truly representative of the American nation." Although this was good idea, it did not make the task of raising the money any easier, but Weyers (a Christian Scientist of great zest and pep) took on the job with enthusiasm. In a way, therefore, the second Hudson window owes almost as much to the Hudson's Bay Company as the first.

In 1928 Governor Sale and Dr. Cobb took up arms together in the battle of the "two old shops". To explain

The West Front, 1947.

THE TIMES WEDNESDAY APRIL 28 1993

Pressure mounts to rebuild City church wrecked by bomb

By Ruth Gledhill and Sheila Gunn

■ A campaign is swelling for what remains of the medieval St Ethelburga's church to become a symbol of triumph over terrorism

THE Church of England is facing strong public pressure, led by MPs and peers, to restore the tiny St Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate church which was destroyed by the IRA bomb in the City of London at the weekend. Many people want the church to be rebuilt, possibly as a shrine to the victims of terrorism.

Hopes that the church could be restored were set back when church leaders said it was too badly damaged. English Heritage said rebuilding would be "not a restoration but a replica".

However, there was strong support at parliament for St Ethelburga's to be rebuilt. Patrick Cormack, chairman of the Conservative party advisory committee on arts and heritage, said: "It would be wholly appropriate to restore it, if nothing else as a monument to all those who have perished at the hands of these evil people."

Lord Harris of Greenwich, Liberal Democrat spokesman on home affairs and a former Home Office minister, has tabled a question to the government asking for help towards restoring St Ethelburga's and the other churches damaged by the Bishopsgate bomb.

The national heritage department said that as the church was a Grade I listed building, the City corporation must decide whether to require the owners to restore the building. Until that was done, the government was not involved.

One public relations company offered to run a free fund-raising appeal to help rebuild the church. But the first archaeologist to assess the damage said yesterday that St Ethelburga's had been destroyed.

Church leaders are considering incorporating the remains of the devastated medieval church in a monument or commemorative chapel to the victims of terrorism.

The Ven George Cassidy, Archdeacon of London, said: "The tragedy is that we could never reconstitute it."

The city's church heritage has been irreparably damaged by the IRA, with only two medieval churches surviving untouched, according to Dr John Schofield, of the Museum of London archaeology service. He completed his first report yesterday after a day-long survey of the three most damaged churches. The London diocese of the Church of England is this week considering what can be salvaged.

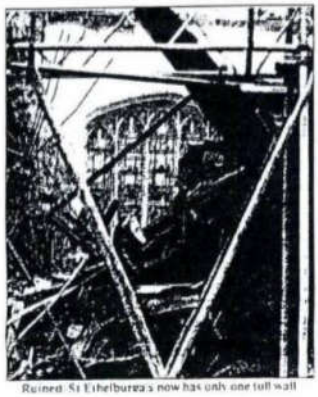
Of the 39 churches in the square mile, only five were medieval and survived the second world war. St Ethelburga's, founded in 1250 and rebuilt in 1390, was the smallest and took the full force of Saturday's blast.

The church was valued last year at £2 million, but an insurance policy introduced after last year's bomb reduced terrorist cover on the building to £100,000. The church was due to be converted into a chapel of ease.

The bomb exploded immediately outside St Ethelburga's and reduced to a pile of rubble all but the east wall, half the north and south walls and one arch of the medieval arcade. The west wall and the interior, including a 17th century stained glass window, have completely gone.

The church will not be lost without a fight. Tony Kilmister, chairman of the Prayer Book Society, said: "Terrorism must not win. God must triumph in every situation. Never, never, never must he come off second best. That includes not letting terrorism triumph at St Ethelburga's."

If the church is not rebuilt, one problem will be the disposal of £30,000-a-year income from funds left to the church by Robert Kitchin in 1557. The diocese will consult the Council for the Care of Churches before decid-ing on the future of St Ethelburga's.



Ruined St Ethelburga's now has only one full wall

A drawing of the Church in the 1920s shows the eye-glasses displayed on one of the shops by an oculist. Below, the ruins of the old church after the April 1993 IRA bombing.

the shops, we have to go back to the earlier history of St. Ethelburga's. In 1570, the churchwardens, ever conscious of the need for money, built a little shop to the south side of the church door, with the intention of renting it out. A similar shop was built in 1613 on the other side. Each shop had a small room over it, possibly living quarters for the tenants. The shops were at first connected by a gallery over the church porch. Later this upper storey was extended across the front of the building, meeting above an archway through which one entered the church, so that the west window was almost entirely blocked off. At one point ST. ETHELBURGA is said to have been written over the archway so that passers-by would know of the spiritual wares on offer within. In the 1920s the tenant of one of the shops was an oculist and the large model of a pair of eye-glasses he used to draw attention to his business is a striking feature in photographs of the church at that time; one wonders if it served as a comforting reminder that "His eye is on the sparrow".

When the City authorities proposed that the shops be demolished in order to widen the street and the sidewalk, Governor Sale was highly indignant at the idea of "another small and interesting piece of old London" disappearing in the name of "progress". He wrote letters, met with sympathizers to the cause, helped Dr. Cobb have a letter published in *The Times*, even suggested that the Company take over the tenancy of the shops. Although Dr. Cobb was to write Sale hopefully in early 1929, "I am not at all sure that the battle is yet lost", in fact it was. The shops came down in 1932. The year before Sale had been forced out of the Governorship by mutinous shareholders. In 1940, as an economy measure, the Company's head office was to move from Hudson's Bay House to Beaver House in Great Trinity Lane. Only the Archives Department remained as St. Ethelburga's neighbour until it too moved to Beaver House in the 1950s.

Yet as long as the Hudson window remained the connection between the church and the Company was not wholly lost. And while as a churchman Dr. Cobb knew that nothing on this earth is "perpetual", he might reasonably have expected that the window would last for longer than 65 years.

As it turned out, St. Ethelburga's was not damaged beyond hope of repair by the bombing. According to *The Times* (29 April 1993):

> Church leaders who clambered over rubble and crawled through broken windows to visit St. Ethelburga's . . . were astonished to find a dozen goldfish swimming peacefully and unscathed around their pond amid piles of broken glass and rubble.
>
> The church leaders also learnt that the church bell, which could not be found, had been blown clear and picked up. It is now lot 199 in Bishopsgate police station's store of lost property.

A couple of weeks later, Paul Sutherland, the Parish Clerk of St. Ethelburga's, whose kind assistance with this article at what must be a very trying time for him has been much appreciated, wrote:

> . . . this year's bomb, planted in a lorry right outside the west door of St. Ethelburga's, has destroyed most of the north wall and the entire west wall. The west gallery and organ and the belfry have collapsed, as has the roof of the church. All the windows, including the three Hudson ones, are extensively damaged. The east and south walls and all the pillars remain. Subject to a more detailed examination than has so far been possible, Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd. reckon that a careful reconstruction is quite possible and for a sum of less than £2 million. A tin roof has been placed over the church *pro tem*. [Mr. Sutherland also added the welcome news that the goldfish have been evacuated to the garden pond of the Vicar of St. Mary's, Paddington Green.]

It is now up to the Diocese of London to decide whether or not to rebuild St. Ethelburga's. It must be borne in mind that the site of the church is potentially valuable (perhaps all the more so as the building on its north side was so badly damaged that it will have to come down) and that the Church has to face the expense of repairing other churches in the City harmed by the bombings. There is also the sad fact that the Church of England has more churches than it needs. St. Ethelburga's was declared redundant in 1991; the next year it was made a chapel of ease to St. Helen's, Bishopsgate. On the other hand, it seems unlikely, given the affection for St. Ethelburga's that the bombing has revealed, that there would be any problem in raising the money needed for restoration. (If there is an appeal for funds, *The Beaver* will let readers know about it, as Canadian and American readers might want to help at least with the cost of repairing the Hudson widows.) And if it is not possible for St. Ethelburga's to continue as a place of worship, surely some appropriate use could be found for the building, so that "this dear old church" could remain a living witness to the shared history of England, the United States and Canada, and to the Courage, Faith and Hope of Henry Hudson the Navigator. ♦

Anne Morton is on the staff of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba. *As there is at the moment no appeal fund for St. Ethelburga's, her fee for this article will be donated to The Ireland Fund of Canada, a non-political, non-sectarian organization dedicated to promoting peace and reconciliation, culture and charity throughout Ireland, North and South.*

Votes for Women!

By Mary E. Hallett and Marilyn I. Davis

Throughout 1913 the suffragists kept up their efforts, trying to create support for suffrage in Manitoba that the premier would not be able to ignore. To this end the Political Equality League published and distributed a number of pamphlets: a statement of their reasons for wanting the vote for women; *The Legal Status of Women in Manitoba* by Dr. Mary Crawford; and *The New Citizenship* by Nellie L. McClung. They spoke wherever they had an opportunity and they circulated petitions at every public function from stampedes to church bazaars.

Finally in January 1914, the PEL executive decided that it was time once again to approach the Manitoba Legislature. The acivities of the PEL had stirred up a great deal of attention, one result being ten thousand signatures on petitions. Other organizations, most of whom had supported suffrage for years, were prepared to join the PEL in a deputation to present the petitions and their case. Dr. Mary Crawford, designated to approach the premier and arrange the meeting, secured Sir Rodmond Roblin's permission to present their case to the legislature. One account described the delegation as:

> probably one of the most cosmopolitan companies that has ever approached a government in the interests of a single reform. It represented many nationalities: Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic, Hebrew, African, Polish, and it is difficult to say how many more. High browed professors were there shoulder to shoulder with plain working girls. Nurses, lawyers, businessmen, journalists, doctors and quiet little housewives whom the census describes as having no occupation.

The delegation were all in "deadly earnest," but Roblin's response to "logic" and "the avalanche of argument" that was put to him, was "decidedly ineffective." The delegation was presented to the premier by Harvey Simpson, the member for Virden, and Dr. Mary Crawford, as president of the PEL, introduced the speakers.

Nellie McClung, representing the Political Equality League, was the last and most effective speaker. Although she was gracious, she stated unequivocally: "We are not here to ask for a reform, or a gift, or a favour, but for a right — not for mercy, but for justice." She pointed out that some men argued that

Novelist and social reformer Nellie McClung was born at Chatsworth, Ontario, in 1873 and died at Victoria, British Columbia, in 1951.

She grew up in rural Manitoba and became a school teacher. Her first novel, *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, was published in 1908. Other works of fiction include *Purple Springs* (1921) and *Flowers for the Living* (1931). She also published two volumes of essays and opinion, *In times like these* (1913) and *The next of kin* (1917).

A lifelong feminist, she was a leader in the struggle for female suffrage in Manitoba, which granted the vote to women in 1916. She was later active in Alberta, taking part in the fight to have women recognized in law as "persons". She sat in the Alberta legislature as a Liberal for Edmonton from 1921 to 1926.

Firing the Heather: The Life and Times of Nellie McClung by Mary E. Hallett and Marilyn I. Davis, will be published this autumn by Fifth House Publishers, Saskatoon. In this excerpt from that biography Nellie McClung and her colleagues of the Manitoba Political Equality League use satire to combat the opposition to female suffrage of Manitoba Premier Sir Rodmond Roblin. The Roblin ministry resigned in 1916 amid charges of corruption. Later that year, under a Liberal government, Manitoba women got the vote.

Manitoba Archives

Sir Rodmond P. Roblin: Hearth and home in danger.

politics was too corrupt for women: "I have never heard a satisfactory explanation of why politics should be corrupt. There is nothing inherently vicious about politics and the politician who says politics are corrupt is admitting one of two things — that he is a party to that corruption or that he is unable to prevent it. In either case . . . he is flying the white signal of distress and we are . . . anxious to come over and help him." Current laws, she also argued, were not satisfactory since one boy in every five families becomes a drunkard because liquor traffic is not controlled by legislation. Thousands of girls are poor and hungry and thousands of women are driven by poverty to a life of shame. She pointed out that white slavery (forced prostitution) was rampant because the punishment for such crimes against women "is two years imprisonment, the same punishment that is meted out to the man who steals a tree or shrub valued at twenty-five dollars." It was time, she insisted, that the woman's point of view be applied to such legislative and legal issues.

Nellie then went on to argue the logic of reversed conditions. "How would you, Sir Rodmond, like to be governed by a parliament of women?" The premier bantered: "I have a good wife."

Like a flash Mrs. McClung turned to the delegation. "Ladies and gentlemen, we have another reason for encouragement. The premier has a good wife, so, surely, he at least will not be afraid to trust the women with the franchise." Turning again to Roblin she prodded, "some people say that your government is afraid to grant the franchise to women."

"They say a good many things about us," Sir Rodmond interjected. "But," Mrs. McClung continued, leaning towards him earnestly, "We don't believe it, Sir Rodmond." This quip was met with "uproarious applause." Finally Nellie concluded: "Sir Rodmond, we have come to the last ditch in our onward march towards freedom and usefulness and we are stretching our hands to you to help us over. Sir Rodmond, it is your move."

Sir Rodmond rose, and proceeded to utter every cliché ever offered as reasons for refusing the franchise to women. First he assured them that if their cause was just then they would eventually succeed, though he neglected to guess in which century. Though he recognized that the delegation before him was large, respectable, intellectual, and the women members "ladylike," he worried whether they might become incendiaries like their European counterparts. "As you know," he said, "we all draw our inspiration in legislation, theology, art, science and other subjects from the Motherland. Now, that being a fact that none will dispute, can you, can anyone, in confidence say that the manifestations that have been made by the women there constitute a guarantee that if the franchise is extended, what we have today will be preserved and not destroyed?"

Next, he brought up the destruction-of-the-home argument. National greatness depended on the home. "Does the franchise for women make that home better?" he worried. Not surprisingly, his question brought cries of "yes" from the gallery, but Roblin was ready for that:

> The facts are against you. It has been said by your president today that you want the suffrage because it has been beneficial over the line. But for every marriage in the United States there is a divorce. Will you tell me that that is in the interests of society? The divorce rate in the United States is caused by the fact that woman has left that sphere which as wife and mother she occupied for fifty or a hundred years.

This time the cries of dissent from the gallery annoyed the premier, and he said petulantly: "I say so. I did not dispute you when you were speaking. You will be good enough to listen to my reply." He had not yet finished with the old chestnuts. He wanted, he said, to protect women from themselves. They believed they were right, but he knew that suffrage was not in their best interests:

> My wife is bitterly opposed to woman suffrage. I have respect for my wife; more than that, I love her:

Members of the Political Equality League with petitions for the Manitoba Government. Top row: Mrs. A.V. Thomas, Mrs. F.J. Dixon. Bottom Row: Dr. Mary Crawford, Mrs. Amelia Buvit.

I am not ashamed to say so. Will anyone say that she would be better as a wife and mother because she could go and talk on the streets about local or dominion politics? I disagree. The mother that is worthy of the name and of the good affection of a good man has a hundredfold more influence in molding and shaping public opinion round her dinner table than she would have in the market place, hurling her eloquent phrases to the multitude. It is in the home that her influence is exercised and felt.

Furthermore, he added, women didn't use the vote when they had it. He was told that "in Colorado they shrank away from the polls as from a pestilence." Again "denials" from the women annoyed the premier. "I tell you that is what I have read. Your nos have no effect on me." He was not, however, going to admit that politics was corrupt. "I have been in politics for many years and I do not know of anything corrupt." A ripple of incredulous laughter brought forth the next question. "If you know that politics is corrupt," he queried, "why do you want to interfere with it?" But he reiterated that he had no knowledge of corruption. No one in his government had ever had a suggestion made to him that was corrupt or improper.

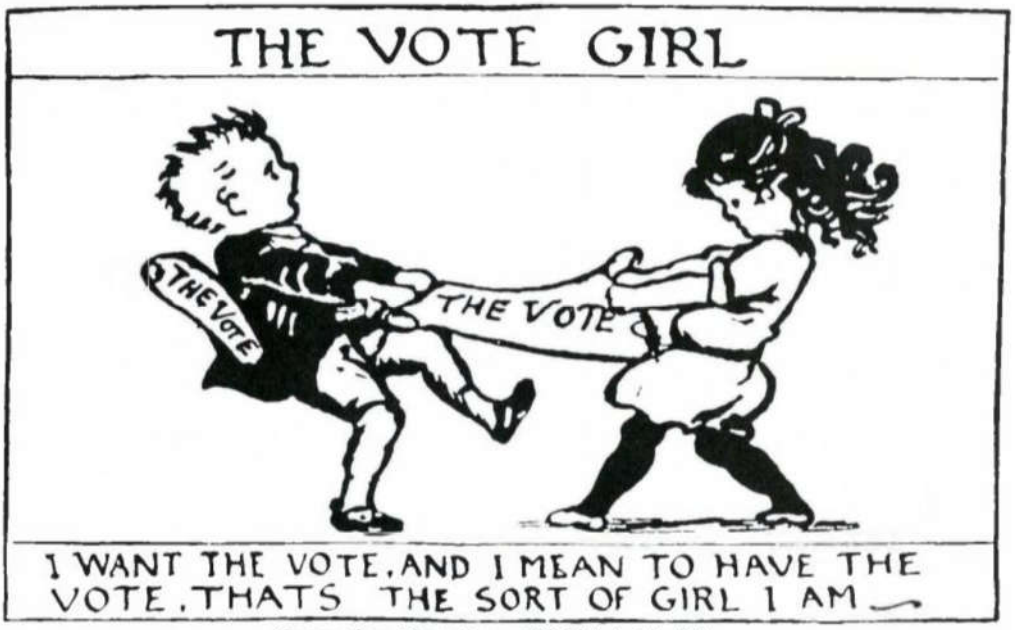
He even made an appeal to class prejudice. "I believe women suffrage would be a retrograde movement, that it will break up the home, that it will throw the children into the arms of the servant girls. Indeed, I am afraid my friend Mr. Rigg [a noted Western labour leader] might shortly come to us for the extension of the fran-

chise to servant girls, on the plea that servant girls have as good a right to vote as any other class of women." This statement must have been greeted with some astonishment by the delegation who had asked for the vote for women on the same basis as men, with no intention of excluding any woman who was a citizen of voting age.

Roblin concluded with the chivalry argument, which Nellie and other speakers had ridiculed for years. He "referred to the early training he had received from his mother and how she had instilled in him a great respect for women that placed them on a much higher plane than man" — a height from which women, apparently, could only sully themselves should they

In fact, Nellie had captured Sir Rodmond's brand of chivalry in a clever little ironic verse, "A Toast to the Ladies," ostensibly written "by an old fashioned Country Gentleman." The last stanza reads:

> The ladies—God bless them,
> Our troubles they share 'em
> So lock 'em away
> In the parlour or harem.
> We give them ideas,
> We pay for their chains,
> And what is more sweet
> Than a wife without brains?
> So here's to the angels



Cartoon from "Grain Growers' Guide", 8 July 1911.

descend to earth to vote. The obvious culture and intelligence of "Mrs. McClung and other eloquent speakers," proved that men have made "great sacrifices that the idol of his heart might have that culture and accomplishment such as we see here today." Where, he intoned, "can you get better evidence of women's superiority and the high place that she occupies than has been given here?" He thought how delighted Lloyd George and Asquith would be if they had been approached "in the same ladylike manner." Nevertheless, Roblin declared himself "unequivocally opposed" to the vote for women in Manitoba. He held that the extension of the franchise would be a "backward step" and that he could not see what women would gain. Apparently if women were not placid, and complacent but cultured "idols" of inactivity and non-intelligence, the whole fabric of society would crumble.

> We foster with elegance,
> Bless their sweet eyebrows,
> But d–n their intelligence.

As Nellie McClung sat listening to Sir Rodmond's speech she was delighted. The suffragists had come to this meeting with little hope that their request would be granted. They had planned a mock parliament for the next night in the Walker Theatre. This was a device that had been used in other cities, and Lillian Thomas had decided to produce one in Winnipeg. Simply, it meant that roles would be reversed — a women's parliament in a world where men were voteless would listen to a request for the suffrage from a delegation of men. Nellie had been away from the city when this scheme was planned and had received little notice that she was to play the premier. There was no hesitation

on her part in accepting the starring role, but she was concerned about her speech. This play had no script. What would she say? Now, here was Sir Rodmond providing her with a speech that hardly needed to be burlesqued. She had not dared to hope that he could be so pompous and insensitive; that he could leave himself so completely open to ridicule. She could not take notes as she sat at the table on the floor of the legislature but she listened intently and watched and memorized every move he made:

> I observed every gesture, the attitude he struck when he caught his thumbs in the armholes of his coat, twiddling his little fingers and teetering on his heels. That denoted a jocular mood. When he wanted to be coldly reasonable though fair withal, he held his elbows close to his body with the palms of his hands outspread. I tried to absorb every tone of his voice, from the ingratiating friendly voice, calculated to set everyone at their ease, even though they were in the presence of a great man, to the loud masterful commanding voice which brooked no opposition.

As the delegation left the chamber Nellie McClung could not resist a final jab. "We'll get you yet, Mr. Premier." The moment the meeting disbanded Nellie hurried home to practice before the mirror. Wes and Jack had been in the gallery and with their help the speech was written and rehearsed.

The next night an overflow crowd gathered at the Walker Theatre. The newspapers had carried detailed accounts of Roblin's rejection of the delegation's request, and the public sensed that they were in for a rare treat. It was rumoured that even some members of Roblin's caucus were surreptitiously buying tickets. Before the curtain went up Nellie came on stage to tell the audience that they were not presenting a fanciful picture, but one in which there was a one-sex parliament as currently existed: only this time it was a woman's parliament in a country where men were deprived of the vote. In fact, she said, they were so anxious to present an authentic play that they had visited the legislature recently to get local colour. Even this opening speech was greeted by laughter and almost continuous applause. There was no doubt that the audience were there to enjoy themselves.

The curtain rose to reveal the women members in evening gowns covered by black cloaks, seated at desks. First, two petitions were received: one protesting against men's clothing — six-inch collars and scarlet ties must be outlawed — the second asking for labour-saving devices for men. Mrs. W.C. Perry then presented a bill to confer dower rights on men. The members of the opposition knitted, read newspapers, or taunted the speaker with remarks like, "you're just trying to get in right with men" — a clever sally greeted with ribald laughter by the audience. Kennethe Haig replied for

Winnipeg Free Press

The Walker Theatre, Winnipeg, where the mock parliament was held, January 1914

the government and then the government members, as one, voted "no."

All of these speeches were received with delight, but the moment people had been waiting for was the arrival of a deputation of men led by Mr. R.C. Skinner with a wheelbarrow full of petitions asking for the vote for men. When his eloquent plea ended, the premier "rose and launched into her reply to the delegation, almost every sentence of which was interrupted by gales of

Glenbow Archives

Nellie McClung: Reverence for the modesty of men.

laughter." From the moment Nellie opened her mouth the audience saw Sir Rodmond Roblin. The little girl who had once been reprimanded for mimicking her aunts was in her glory now. Her voice dripped with tolerance and kindly understanding for these misled men as she complimented them on their courtesy and gentlemanly appearance. "If men were all so intelligent as these representatives of the downtrodden sex seem to be it might not do any harm to give them the vote. But all men are not intelligent." Now she adopted her serious mien: elbows close to her sides, palms outstretched. "There is no use giving men votes. They wouldn't use them. They would let them spoil and go to waste. Then again, some men would vote too much." Now her voice took on a warning note. "Good men shrink from the polls as from a pestilence." Then in a scolding tone Nellie asked how the men could have the audacity to come asking for the vote when seven-eighths of court offenders were men. "Surely you do not ask me to enfranchise an army of law breakers? Giving men the vote would unsettle the home . . . In administrating the government we have studied economy. We have studied every dollar — to see if we could make better use of it ourselves. We have been very generous, we are paying fourteen women for every government job." Then Nellie's voice returned to the soft soap tones. She took on a pious manner:

> The modesty of our men, which we reverence, forbids us giving them the vote. Man's place is on the farm . . . It may be that I am old-fashioned. I may be wrong. After all, men may be human. Perhaps the time may come when men may vote with women — but in the meantime be of good cheer. Advocate and Educate. We will try to the best of our great abilities to conduct the affairs of the province and prove worthy standard bearers of the good old flag of our grand old party which has often gone down to disgrace but never to defeat.

As the delegation retreated, Mr. Skinner delivered his parting shot: "I venture to say that we will get you yet." After the deafening applause and the laughter of the audience had subsided, the women's parliament prorogued.

Even the Conservative *Winnipeg Telegram* admitted that the mock parliament was a great success and quite amusing. In its account, however, the audience was entirely female, Nellie McClung's speech was "somewhat overdone," and the women on stage were successful because "they actually revelled in their pretence of holding office and that secret ambition that they all shared undoubtedly accounted for the great success of the entire program." The other papers could exult in the evening's success without any qualifications. "Smiles of anticipation, ripples of merriment, gales of laughter and storms of applause punctuated every point and paragraph of what is unanimously conceded to be the best burlesque ever staged in Winnipeg." Many other centres staged mock parliaments, but it is Winnipeg's that is remembered: perhaps because no one else had a Roblin, and no one else had a Nellie McClung. Because of the success of this performance it was repeated in Winnipeg and taken to Brandon but subsequent performances, although successful, could not come up to the initial performance and the women turned down offers from other centres. The mock parliament brought many new supporters to the cause and, being a financial success, it funded the rest of the campaign. The suffrage supporters had not expected the mock parliament to endear them to the premier, and they realized that now, in order to achieve their goal, they would have to fight for the defeat of the Conservative government. It was necessary for the movement to become politically partisan. ♦

From "Firing the Heather: The Life and Times of Nellie McClung" by Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis, published this autumn by Fifth House Publishers, Saskatoon, at $26.95 and distributed by the University of Toronto Press.

'The Matchless Six'

Canadian Women at the Olympics, 1928

BY RON HOTCHKISS

The names Bobbie Rosenfeld, Myrtle Cook, Ethel Smith, Jane Bell, Ethel Catherwood, and Jean Thompson mean little, if anything, to a majority of Canadians today, but sixty-five years ago these women were national figures whose athletic endeavours won international acclaim. When the "Matchless Six" arrived at Toronto's Union Station on 28 August 1928, a crowd of 200,000 was there to greet them and to line the parade route. Another 100,000 cheered them when they reached Sunnyside amusement park.

The group consisted of two factory workers, a business college student, a secretary, and two high school students. They typified a generation of young women who challenged the belief that sports were for men, while setting national track and field marks that still stand.

The Twenties are remembered as "The Golden Age of Sports". Everywhere, Canadian women were becoming more visible as they speedskated, played tennis, ran, and competed in hockey. As one newspaper aptly put it:

> They burst on the nineteen twenties — in their boy's sneakers, pup-tent bloomers and spinaker middies and smashed forever the Victorian pruderies that had consecrated playing fields for men only.

The widespread acceptance of women in sport was neither automatic nor easily won. While their activities during the First World War had done much to break down barriers, women soon discovered that many pre-war stereotypes persisted. Sport was still thought of as a masculine activity, and women who participated were denigrated as "Amazons". The conviction that "a woman athlete must be built like a baby grand piano and have a face like a hatchet," was not uncommon at the time.

There was also the issue of morality. The sight of women in "scant but gaudy uniforms" at public track meets, swimming contests, and basketball games, performing in front of male spectators and in intimate contact with male coaches, trainers, and masseurs, was anathema to the moral guardians of society. Some doctors went as far as to blame the less restrictive sports clothing for tuberculosis and other diseases among young women.

Sports were seen as "improper" activities for young ladies because it was thought that running and jumping could be harmful to their reproductive organs. Women were expected to take care to provide "the most healthful physiques for child-bearing." Typical was an article carried by a popular magazine in which a director of women's basketball in Canada defended the sport by offering evidence that three former captains had successfully borne eight children. Yet in all of this, the message being repeatedly conveyed was that women who were too competitive and too concerned about physical or intellectual achievements, would utlimately end up without a husband.

At the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 there had been no female participants. This was in keeping with the ancient Olympics where women were forbidden to take part either as athletes or as spectators. This policy was strongly supported by the founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin. A product of the Victorian age, de Coubertin believed woman's role was that of companion of the male and the mother of the family. In an essay about modern Olympism he remarked:

> I personally am against the participation of women in public competitions, which does not mean that they should not participate in sports, yet not in public. At the Olympic Games their primary role should be like in the ancient tournaments — the crowning of the [male] victors with laurels.

Despite de Coubertin's opposition, women slowly won concessions in each successive Olympics. By 1924, when the VIII Olympiad was held in Paris, the events of swimming, highboard diving, tennis, fencing, and yachting were deemed suitable for women. Even so, at these Olympics female competitors comprised only 4.4 percent of the total participants. Further, the high-profile events, track and field, still remained closed

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"The Matchless Six" and chaperone at Amsterdam. Left to right: Marie Parkes (chaperone), Bobbie Rosenfeld, Jean Thompson, Ethel Smith, Myrtle Cook, Ethel Catherwood, Jane Bell.

"because to perform them properly, women had to breathe heavily, look messy and sweat."

In 1924, de Coubertin resigned as president of the International Olympic Committee because of ill health. This, together with mounting pressure from European women, resulted in a breakthrough. The International Amateur Athletic Federation decided to allow women's participation in track and field at the 1928 Games in Amsterdam on a trial basis. The victory, however, was not total. Only five track and field events would be on the program: the 100-metre and 800-metre races; the 400-metre relay race; the running high jump; and the discus.

The Canadian Olympic Committee decided to send a small women's team to compete. The decision initiated heated debate. Some Canadians felt that women would be "excess baggage", a feminine "millstone" around the neck of the team. Others argued that the Olympics, old and new, had operated well on the principle of no female participation. Why change now? Yet a *Toronto Globe* editorial cogently provided the case for the other side when it argued:

> It proves nothing to say that the games at Sparta were limited to males. It is absurd to compare the state of women in ancient Greece with that of her modern descendant. In every sphere and calling of life women are playing a noble part today, and there is no earthly reason why they should not exhibit their prowess on the athletic field.

The debate did not end with the selection of the Canadian women's team, but continued into the Olympics and beyond. For defenders of the status quo, female participation in the Olympic Games was merely another example of the disturbing changes occurring in post-war Canada. Women already possessed the vote, they smoked, used make-up, went everywhere unchaperoned. Where would it end?

The six women who represented Canada at the 1928 Olympics never saw themselves as pioneers preparing the way for future female Olympians. Their purpose for going was not motivated by any heroic ideal. One of the six, Ethel Smith, put it this way:

> We just felt that they took us over to run and it didn't make any difference if we were the first women or not. We were there to compete and win. That was the main thing.

Nevertheless, this did not diminish the fact that they were young women embarking on the adventure of their lives. Only Myrtle Cook had been further east than Halifax, and none had experienced the thrill of participating in the Olympic Games. The Canadian Press had dubbed them "The Matchless Six." They were world-record holders, confident, and at "the top of their game." As one reporter wrote: "The dopesters have it that the girls are as bright a hope as Canada has ever sent to the Olympics."

A headline in the *Toronto Daily Star* of 10 July 1928 read, "Olympic Train Leaves En Route For Europe Amid Great Acclaim". That afternoon, about 500 people gathered at Toronto's Union Station to wish the women well as they departed for Europe. In addition to the six athletes, the team consisted of a manager, Alexandrine Gibb, sports columnist for the *Toronto Daily Star* and president of the Canadian Ladies' Athletic Club, and a chaperone, Marie Parkes of Toronto Varsity. The mood was light as the team posed for pictures and acknowledged the good wishes of the crowd. Amongst the well-wishers were probably the fiancés of Myrtle Cook and Ethel Smith. The two women had postponed their weddings until after the

Olympics when they would "hang the spiked shoes on the walls for domestic emergencies." Also in the crowd were friends and relatives who had helped the team raise money for the trip through bake sales, cutting grass, and even a minstrel show at Massey Hall.

Now, as the train pulled out of the station on its way to Montreal, they could relax and banter good naturedly with the men's track and field team about their chances at Amsterdam. When the train stopped at Trenton, however, M.M. "Bobby" Robinson, Manager of Athletics for the Canadian Olympic Team, called a special meeting of the women and "laid down the law concerning diet and other matters pertaining to training." The previous Saturday he had caught some of the women's team drinking pop. He reminded them that they couldn't win on pop and that from now on they would be in strict training and would be expected to live up to the schedule the same as the men. "You can enjoy yourselves after you have won at Amsterdam," was his final word on the subject.

When they arrived in Montreal the White Star liner S.S. *Albertic* was waiting to take them overseas. It had been decided that the track and field athletes, swimmers, wrestlers, and oarsmen would sail 11 July on the *Albertic*, while the boxers, cyclists, and lacrosse team would follow one week later on the *Empress of Scotland*.

As the *Albertic* steamed up the St. Lawrence, a special presentation was made to the women by P.J. Mulqueen, President of the Canadian Olympic Committee. He entrusted to them the Canadian ensign which had led the two parades of Canada's Olympic hockey champions in 1924 and 1928. In an emotional ceremony, Mulqueen handed over the flag and said:

> Here is the most cherished trophy in all my collection of athletic trophies gathered in the course of forty years in eleven branches of amateur sport. . . . It has led two Canadian hockey teams to victory in Olympic hockey tournaments and I feel confident that you will add much honour to its glorious history. If the Canadian girls' team leads the world at the conclusion of this first Olympic meet I would not change the flag for the most coveted athletic trophy in all Canadian history.

Fanny (also known as Bobbie) Rosenfeld wearing her Patterson Chocolate Company track outfit.

It was a confidence that was not misplaced. Based on their results at the Halfiax Olympic trials, where they had set three world records, the women's team had no doubts that they would be the world's champions. Sports writer Lou Marsh saw this self-assuredness in a broader perspective. Commenting on "the smallest, the cockiest, the best trained and the best organized Olympic contingent Canada ever sent

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The team in travelling outfits. Front row, left to right: Ethel Smith, Myrtle Cook, Jean Thompson. Middle Row: Bobbie Rosenfeld, Ethel Catherwood, Jane Bell. Back Row: Marie Parkes (chaperone), Bobby Kerr (coach) and Alexandrine Gibb (manager).

forth," Marsh attributed the mood to the war years. More specifically, it was Canada's participation in the war that "sold Canadians the idea that they are just as good as anybody on earth doing anything."

Once the *Albertic* moved into the open ocean a rigid schedule of training was implemented — a morning salt-water bath around eight o'clock, breakfast at nine, a work-out in the gym at ten-thirty, play until noon, luncheon at one, a walk from two-thirty to three-thirty, deck games, dinner at six, dancing in the evening, bed at ten o'clock, a visit from the chaperone and manager of the women's team at ten-thirty to see that lights were out. Occasionally, a couple of the women would extend their curfews illegally. Even Manager Gibb recognized the difficulty of exacting a strict regimen:

> Girls are high strung at any time but girl athletes who are at the peak of their condition for the contests are about as safe to handle as a basket full of dynamite. If we can keep this crowd contented and happy until they toe the mark for their various events, the officials will be delighted.

They arrived at Southampton on 19 July. The athletes were awake at dawn and were soon busy looking after their own baggage, lugging it past customs and onto "the tiny toy-like trains for the trip to London."

After checking into their hotel, the women had lunch with Premier Ferguson of Ontario, and then left for a light workout at Stamford Bridge. For Gibb, the hardest part of the practice was dealing with newspapermen and movie cameramen. The media were particularly anxious to know more about these women, news of whose record-breaking feats had preceded them. Also, interest in the Canadian women's team was high because England's female athletes would not be participating in the Olympics. As a protest against the reduced program for women in track and field, they had decided to stay home.

The idea of an Olympic village for the athletes would not be realized until the next Olympics in Los Angeles. Consequently, living quarters had been arranged in Amsterdam several months in advance. As Robinson diplomatically put it, "the Canadian party is comfortably, but not sumptuously housed in four hotels."

In the practice stadium, the female athletes from Canada found themselves the centre of attention from the media and other Olympic participants. Stories of their results at the Halifax trials had been picked up by the London press and spread to the continent. General opinion regarded the Canadians as the group to beat. The Americans, particularly, were interested observers as the team went through its paces. And when the coaches of the American girls' team attempted to scout the Canadians, the women deliberately put on such a poor show that the Americans learned nothing.

These concerns, however, were secondary as the women prepared for their events. They discovered that they, too, were susceptible to hero worship as they recognized athletes from previous Olympics training beside them. Ethel Smith, Bobbie Rosenfeld and Ethel Catherwood eagerly sought Paavo Nurmi's autograph. The "Flying Finn" had won three gold medals at Paris in 1924 and was a favourite to win at Amsterdam. Yet, the Canadian women were not without their own admirers. An American correspondent commented on "the beautiful Canadian girls — Ethel Catherwood, a slim, blue-eyed fairy, who high jumps five feet three inches; Myrtle Cook who runs 100 metres in 12 seconds flat, Fanny Rosenfeld, who throws the discus 120 feet."

On the eve of the opening ceremonies, however, Lou Marsh's report in the *Toronto Daily Star* provided readers with some causes for concern regarding the success of the Canadian women's team. The recurrence of an old leg injury left Jean Thompson's success in the 800 metres doubtful. Jane Bell's tendon injury threatened her own chances in the 100 metres and that of the relay team. In addition, Myrtle Cook was "a bundle of nerves" and Bobbie Rosenfeld was regarded

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Canadian athletes and fans cheer the team on from the stands. The Canadian Red Ensign which P.J. Mulqueen entrusted to the team can barely be discerned on the laps of the spectators behind the standing official.

as lacking the physique and competent instruction to do well in the discus. Ethel Catherwood's chances appeared to be the best of the team. Yet, Alexandrine Gibb remained optimistic and confident that "the girls will be all right with care."

The official opening of the IXth Olympiad took place on Saturday, 28 July. The morning had begun with a steady downpour "which gave promise of lasting not only hours but days." Nevertheless, Amsterdam was not to be denied its moment. The city had been trying to get the Games since 1912 but had lost to rivals with better publicity and political claims. It almost lost the 1928 Olympics, too, when the Dutch government refused to provide financial assistance. But a remarkable fund-raising campaign was undertaken and Dutch municipalities and citizens from as far away as the East Indies contributed enough money to ensure success.

The showpiece of the Olympic facilities was the Grand Stadium where the track, field, gymnastic and equestrian events would be held. It covered an area of over 40 acres. Located in the southern part of central Amsterdam, it had been built on a swamp by driving 4,500 piles, varying in length from 36 to 48 feet, into the soft ground. A million cubic yards of sand had been brought in to raise the surface six feet.

The Stadium's horizontal line was broken by the Marathon Tower, 150 feet high, from which an Olympic flame would burn for the first time throughout the Games. A large results board to inform the spectators of what was going on was another innovation.

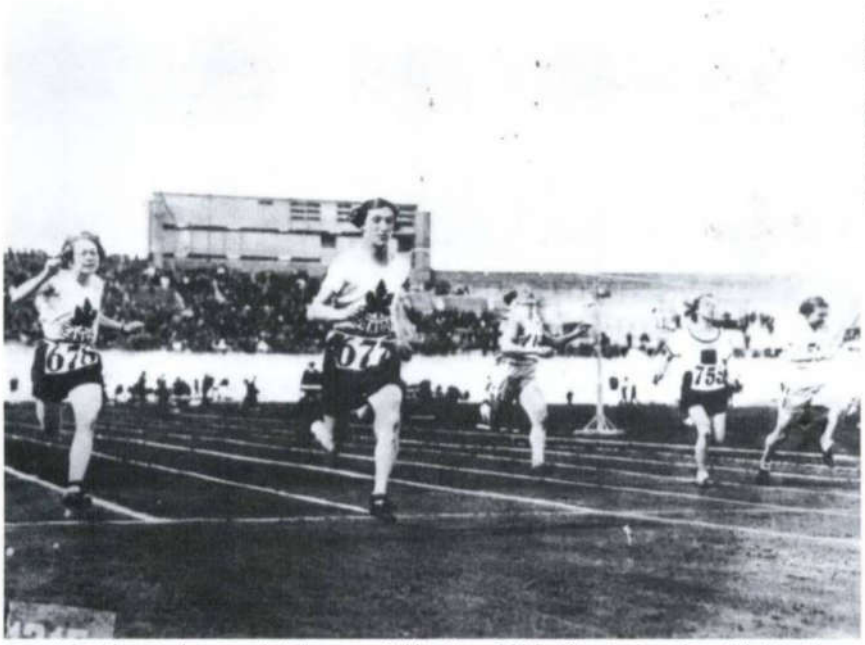
Shortly before the opening ceremony began, the skies half cleared and the rain held off. The arrival of the Dutch Consort, Prince Henry, at 1:45 p.m. and the playing of the national anthem, signalled the beginning of the march-past of nations. Ordinarily the monarch, Queen Wilhelmina, would have received the athletes, but a religious controversy that resulted from holding the competitions on a Sunday had caused the queen to absent herself.

Led by the representatives of Greece, over eight hundred athletes from forty-six countries began their circuit of the track, saluted the prince in their own national fashion, and lined up facing the royal box. For the first time since the war, Germany was represented. Also, the presence of almost 300 female competititors served notice that they were ready to take their place beside the male athletes.

Joe Wright Jr., winner of rowing's Diamond Sculls, carried the flag at the head of the Canadian contingent and Earl McCready, the big wrestler from Regina, was the standard-bearer. Behind them marched the Canadian athletes three abreast in 35 rows. The women's team was at the lead, "in their smart outfits of scarlet hats and shoes, white blazers piped with red — white stockings, pleated white skirt and silk blouse."

The pre-ceremony jitters quickly disappeared in the applause which greeted them, and every now and then some spectator would stand and shout "Canada", to which the women would wave in acknowledgement.

Outside the stadium, large numbers of people who were unable to obtain tickets jammed the streets and



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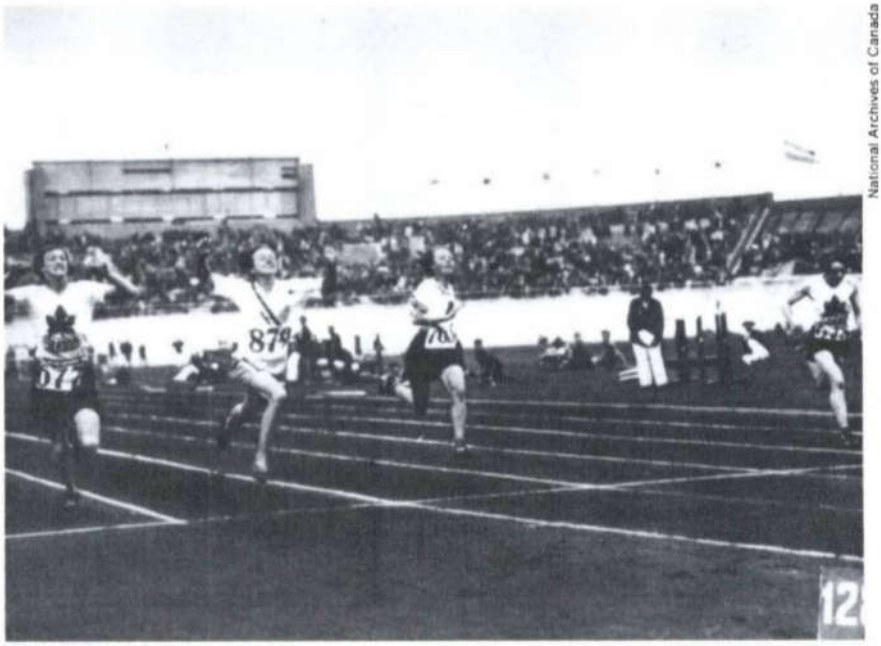
A semi-final heat in the women's 100 metres, Bobbie Rosenfeld finishing in first place. Ethel Smith second.



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The controversial finish in the women's 100-metre final. Years later Alexandrine Gibb could barely hold her temper when speaking of the event. Left to right: Rosenfeld, Robinson (U.S.A.), Steinberg (Germany) and Smith.

plazas so tightly that some delegations of athletes had difficulty entering the stadium. The Finnish team, with the standard-bearer in the lead, had to scramble over an outer wall to gain entrance. For the 40,000 spectators inside, the opening ceremonies were an exciting and entertaining spectacle. They applauded the hoisting of the Olympic flag amid a blast of trumpets and the roar of cannon, and they cheered when the pigeons were released, each pigeon having a ribbon bearing the colour of one of the competing nations tied to its neck. The only sour note was the confiscation of 2,000 cameras by Dutch detectives in order to protect the Olympic photographic monopoly which had been sold to one firm.

For Jean Thompson and Jane Bell, the opening ceremonies were bittersweet. Because of their injuries, it was decided that they should not participate in the parade requiring three hours' marching and standing on wet ground. Yet for these two high school girls from Ontario, the disappointment was diminished by the excitement of the Olympic pomp and circumstance.

The IXth Olympiad began auspiciously for Canada. To the surprise of everyone except the Canadians, Percy Williams, a 19-year-old high school student from Vancouver, won the gold medal in the 100 metres. It was the first medal event of the Olympics and his accomplishment provided an example for the Canadian athletes to emulate. The women showed that they were equal to the challenge. When the heats for the women's 100 metres were completed on the afternoon of 30 July, six finalists remained from a field of thirty-one. Of the final six, three were Canadians — Myrtle Cook, Bobbie Rosenfeld, and Ethel Smith. Commenting on their promising start, the *Toronto Globe* boasted:

> There are many who believe that the women athletes of no other country in the world can successfully compete against the "matchless six" who are wearing Canada's colors at the Olympiad. The opinion seems justified following the victories scored in the preliminaries.

At twenty-six, Myrtle Cook was the veteran of the Canadian team. She came from a diverse sporting background. She was a champion in tennis, ice hockey, basketball, canoeing, bowling, and cycling. At the age of fifteen, she qualified for the women's national track and field team. In 1926, she led a group of ten athletes to England — the first women's track team to represent Canada overseas. She was an experienced sprinter who had been competing in meets in Canada and the United States since 1925. As a member and Director of Athletics for Toronto's Canadian Ladies Athletic Club, she won medals at New York's prestigious Melrose Games and had regularly run in competitions held each summer at the Canadian National Exhibition.

Cook was an intense competitor possessing a highly strung disposition. A team member described her as "a very keyed up girl." But once into a race, she displayed the form that had made her a first-class sprinter. At the Halifax trials she ran the 60-yard dash in 7 seconds and set a new world's record in the 100 metres of 12 seconds. This latter mark established her as the favourite to win the gold medal at the Olympics. When the team came to vote for its captain, her age and experience made Cook the natural choice.

Bobbie Rosenfeld's appearance in the 100-metre final was unexpected. She had been brought to Amsterdam to compete in the discus. Consequently, her fine results in the 100-metre heats were a pleasant surprise. But when it was discovered that both events were scheduled for the same time on 31 July Canadian officials were forced to choose between the two. After some discussion, it was decided that her chances in the sprint were better — having reached the finals — and she was scratched from the field event.

Fanny Rosenfeld's success at the Olympics came as no surprise to those familiar with her career. She was one of those rare athletes who excelled in whatever sport she undertook. Accomplished in tennis, softball, basketball, hockey, and track and field, she was the complete athlete. "Bobbie" as she was almost always called, was not big — five foot five — but her size belied a natural ability and intense drive to succeed. She made an impression on all who knew her. A contemporary remembered her:

> She didn't look powerful but she was wiry and quick. Above all she was aggressive, very aggressive physically. No, I don't mean that she made a lot of noise or had a belligerent manner. She simply went after everything with full force.

She was born in Dneipropetrovsk, Russia, on 28 December 1905 and emigrated to Barrie, Ontario, with her parents when she was three weeks old. Growing up in Barrie provided Bobbie with opportunities to develop her love of sports — softball in the summer, hockey in the winter. By the time she was a teenager, she had made a reputation for herself in the area as an outstanding athlete.

This reputation was enhanced one summer day in Beaverton, a small community across Lake Simcoe from Barrie. "It was at a picnic," Bobbie recalled, "a three ring sporting carnival, and I was on a factory girls' softball team. I had done some running in Barrie and was pretty speedy on the bases. One of the girls suggested I enter for the 100-yard dash, but heck I was wearing those big pup tent bloomers. Finally I was pursuaded to run and I won. People seemed surprised and they told me I'd just beaten the Canadian champion."

Barrie, Ontario, as it was known to the young Bobbie Rosenfeld when she beat the Canadian champion.

In 1922 Rosenfeld and her family moved to Toronto. There she found work at the Patterson Chocolate Company. She became a part of the city's expanding sports scene and flourished on the competition. The development of industrial leagues in many large Canadian cities at the time was attracting many women like Rosenfeld, and they eagerly joined teams to play a variety of sports. Opportunities in track and field were offered by women's athletic clubs which were also beginning to appear. Rosenfeld joined the Pats Athletic Club, sponsored by Patterson's and was soon entering competitions. When she first ran at the Canadian National Exhibition, however, she discovered that the stores in Toronto did not carry track and field attire for women. As a result, she performed wearing her brother's swimming trunks, father's socks, and a gym jersey.

Her ability as a track and field athlete was affirmed in 1925 when the Pats Athletic Club won the points title at the Ontario Ladies Track and Field Championship. She had been the only entrant from the club and had placed first in the discus, the shot put, the 220, and 120-yard low hurdles, and the running broad jump; and second in the 100-yard dash and the javelin. Her accomplishments in the discus, shot put, and javelin, were all the more remarkable because she had never been coached in these events and had never competed in them.

When Bobbie Rosenfeld competed at the women's Olympic trials in Halifax, her fame as a track and field athlete was well known. And if there were any doubts about her ability, she answered them by setting a new Canadian record in the discus of 120′ 1″, and running the 100 metres in 12⅝ seconds, only ⅝ seconds slower than the world's record.

She deflected any praise of her accomplishments with a sense of humour and a sharp tongue. Lou Marsh called her "the comedian of the girls' contingent." A team mate, Jane Bell, remembered her repartee during poker games as "fantastic" and her "wonderful loving personality." As a pioneer in cracking the gender barrier at the Olympic Games, her strength of character would be tested. Nevertheless, one writer judged her:

> . . . well-suited to such a challenge. She possessed a thick skin, a broad sense of humour, and a ready wit. These attributes, along with her tremendous personal popularity and strength of character, prepared her to be the figure around which the Canadian team crystallized.

Indeed, her influence was such that when she died in 1969, Bell confessed "that part of me had gone too."

As the finalists lined up for the start of the 100 metres, the Canadians could be easily identified by their red shorts and white jerseys with a red maple leaf and "Canada" emblazoned on them. Following the example of some of the American athletes, Myrtle Cook and Ethel Smith had cut the sleeves from their shirts to allow freer movement of their arms and thus give them more speed. Unfortunately, Smith was not well. She had been ill in the morning, suffering severe pains in her side. As she completed her warmups she was shaky but determined to do her best.

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Members of the Canadian team at the opening ceremonies, Amsterdam.

Ethel Smith was another sprinter who had come to the Olympic team from Toronto's athletic clubs. She was born in the city's West End in 1907 and had moved to the Beaches district when she was seven. Her family was poor, and at fourteen she left school to work for an embroidery company. Yet she still found time for sports, rushing home from work for a quick supper and then off to a commercial league basketball or baseball game. At sixteen she joined a track and field team sponsored by the local hydro commission and discovered a passion for running.

During the next few years she developed into an excellent sprinter. She joined Myrtle Cook as a member of the Canadian Ladies Athletic Club and was soon attracting notice. Her training was rudimentary and there were few tracks on which to practise. She and Cook would frequently jog out to the Woodbine Race Track and use the facility for training. In addition, Smith ran on the Central Y's indoor track during the winter months and at the track on the Canadian National Exhibition grounds in warm weather. She and Cook were coached by a local man who taught them little more than how to develop a smoother running style. Indeed, running and rubdowns were the extent of their training. "My dad used to give my legs a good rubdown, but that was all the training we had," Smith remembered.

Remarkably, she evolved into a great sprinter. At the Olympic trials she ran the 100 metres in 12⅖ seconds. A hard working and talented athlete, she was motivated by the belief that, "If you love the thing you're doing and your heart is in it, you're going to do the best you can." Sports generally, and the 1928 Olympics specifically, were to have such an impact on her life that fifty years later she would confess, "My heart is still in it . . . I wish I could do it all over again."

The field for the women's 100-metre final also consisted of Leni Schmidt and Ern Steinberg of Germany and Betty Robinson of the United States. Cook, Rosenfeld, and Schmidt were regarded as the strongest contenders, but many were hopeful of a Canadian sweep in the event. As the athletes prepared for the starter's commands, the spectators and reporters watched expectantly as the first contest for medals in women's track and field promised to be a good one. But what followed, according to the correspondent for the *New York Times*, were "scenes entirely feminine, and never before witnessed in any Olympic stadium."

As the world record-holder and favourite, Myrtle Cook undoubtedly felt the pressure to do well. It was expected that she would win a medal for Canada. Nervous and high-strung under ordinary circumstances, Cook had to deal with the additional burden of performing in her first Olympics before thousands of spectators. In addition, she and the other competitors would be making sports history. For the first time at the Olympic Games, women would be competing in a track event final. So when she broke before the gun, taking Schmidt with her, it was disappointing but not unexpected. Both women were charged with a false start and warned by the German starter that a second

false start would mean disqualification. A reporter for the *New York Times* described what happened next:

> Then the six finalists lined up again and the German command, *vertig*, came again, as the order for the set position and — again the little Canadian could not hold it, but broke badly all by herself. A roar of protest came up from the stands and the German starter walked down the lane of the Canadian breaker and waved her off the track.

When the starter signalled her out, Cook stood unbelieving for a moment until she realized what it meant and then burst into tears. A third attempt was made to get the runners under way but was spoiled by Schmidt's second false start. When informed of her disqualification, however, the German athlete "shook her fist under the starter's nose and the spectators for the moment thought she might stage a face-scratching and hair-pulling act." The perplexed official retreated a step then motioned her off the track:

> . . . at the same time turning to comfort Myrtle Cook, who had sat down too near the starting line and was sobbing lustily. The starter, fearing the bad effect upon the other girls, succeeded in getting the Canadian girl removed to a pile of cushions on the grass where she remained, her head buried in her arms and her body shaking with sobs, for at least a half an hour.

The false starts, disqualifications, and delays had their effect on the remaining four entrants. Smith remembered: "I looked back at Myrtle, she was standing behind and the tears were streaming down her face and I thought: 'Oh my God, she's my friend and she's out of it.' " The starter had so intimidated the Canadians and the German that they held back at the starting line, terrified of being disqualified. Consequently, when the fourth attempt to begin the race was successful, it was the sixteen-year-old American, Betty Robinson, who emerged as the leader. At the half-way point she still led, but by the 100-yard mark Bobbie Rosenfeld had closed so rapidly that at the finish it was difficult to tell who had won. Smith had finished in third and Steinberg of Germany, fourth.

Rosenfeld's first words after the race were, "Was I first or second?" Indeed, the finish was so close that the German judge who picked first and the French judge who picked second each chose the American. The American chief judge named Robinson first and Rosenfeld second. But the English and French judges contended that Robinson had broken the tape with her arms and not with her body as called for by the rules. Nevertheless, after much discussion Robinson was declared the winner.

The Canadian officials, especially Mulqueen and Gibb, were so convinced that Rosenfeld had won that they lodged an official protest. Mulqueen felt that the action was important for the team's morale. Yet another member of the Canadian Olympic Committee, Dr. A.S. Lamb, disassociated himself from the protest, claiming that it violated the Olympic ideal of sportsmanship. When it was disallowed, many felt that the failure of the Canadians to provide a united front was the cause. The bad feelings arising from this incident continued to be played out in the newspapers for some time. And when the Amateur Athletic Association of Canada met for its annual meeting in Port Arthur in December, the session was a stormy and rancorous one.

The controversy surrounding the women's 100 metres could not diminish the accomplishments of the Canadian women in this event. Three of Canada's four entrants qualified for the final; Smith won a bronze medal; Rosenfeld won a silver in a close finish behind the winner who set a new Olympic record of 12⅕ seconds. Cook's disqualification and the rejection of the protest over Rosenfeld's placing, however, still rankled. As Bobby Robinson remarked:

> With a German starter and an American majority on the jury of judges, it seems impossible to get an even break. To win, one must do so by a decisive margin which leaves no room for argument, otherwise the favored nations get all the breaks. . . .

On Wednesday, 1 August the preliminary heats for the 800 metres were run and another incident occurred which led to a Canadian protest. In the heat won by Canada's Jean Thompson, the American athlete who finished second was paced in the home stretch by a team mate running on the grass infield. This was a clear infraction of the rules. When Canadian officials drew attention to the violation, they were told that the offender had been warned not to do it again. Instead of disqualification, the American advanced to the finals. Robinson was so incensed by the decision that he issued a public statement critical of the manner in which the Olympics were being conducted. He complained that "Canadian athletes have been penalized for violating the rules while other athletes get away with violations just as glaring."

The controversy almost overshadowed Thompson's performance in her heat. But her results raised hopes that she would bring the Canadian women's team its first world championship.

Jean Thompson was the youngest member of the team. A schoolmate remembered her as "a shy, quiet, girl who had one thing in mind and that was to be the best at what she wanted to be." She had achieved that end by setting national and international marks in the middle distance track event of the 800 metres.

She was born in Penetanguishene, Ontario, on 10 October 1910, the fifth of seven children. Her ability as a runner was first noticed by one of her high school teachers, L.A. Wendling, who became her coach. She

The young Jean Thompson trained as a runner on quiet streets like this one in Penetanguishene (also widely known in the shorter version, "Penetang").

would run up and down Penetang's Church Street while he drove beside her in his car. They became a familiar sight to Penetang residents — her racing alongside the car and him shouting instructions through the open window. During the summer months, she continued her unorthodox training by running the basepaths with the men of a local baseball team.

As Thompson became better known, drawing the attention of sports reporters beyond her small town, she acquired the sobriquet, the "Penetanguishene Pansy." The delicate alliterative quality of the title, however, did not reflect the desire and determination she brought to her sports. Neither did it indicate her strength of character in facing and overcoming personal challenges. Her life was not untouched by tragedy — on Labour Day weekend in 1924 her mother had been killed in an auto accident. Yet her family and friends had always supported and encouraged her. She had responded by becoming a great middle-distance runner; an extraordinary feat for a teenager from rural Ontario.

The town of Penetanguishene was no less proud of her. For it, too, had been touched by the publicity surrounding her achievements. A 10 July 1928 article in the Toronto *Daily Star* remarked:

> Miss Jean Thompson who could pass for Miss Cook's brother without cutting her hair much shorter, has moved Penetang right out of the tall timbers by three times breaking the world's record.

She was one of their own and they supported her spiritually and financially. They had provided the money for her trip to Halifax to compete in the Olympic trials. She did not disappoint them. There she set a new world's record of 2:21 ⅕ seconds in the 800 metres.

Thompson's hopes for a medal had been placed in jeopardy by a leg injury she had suffered during training in Amsterdam. Team officials were concerned about the effect that it would have on her morale. Consequently, they decided to enter Bobbie Rosenfeld in the event as well. Bobbie had never trained for this distance, but her inexperience did not prevent her from qualifying and joining Thompson in the final.

On the afternoon of 2 August, nine runners lined up for the 800 metres final. It was the longest race on the program and was thought by some to be too arduous for women. The competitors had to complete two laps of the track, and there were concerns that such a distance would tax the physical capabilities of the athletes.

Thompson started well, and ran in second place behind Hitomi of Japan for the first half. As she began the last lap, however, she had dropped to third behind two German runners who had moved up and were setting a very fast pace. Thompson attempted to hold her position but was dropped to fourth when Gentzel of Sweden passed her. Rounding the last bend, the seventeen-year-old from Penetang charged for the leaders, passed one of the Germans, and had retaken third place. At the same time Hitomi made her charge, but in passing the Canadian she jostled her. As the runners came down the final stretch, Radke of Germany was first, and behind her Hitomi, Gentzel, and Thompson. It now became a question of whether

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Jean Thompson, "The Penetanguishene Pansy", winning her heat in the 800 metres, ahead of McDonald of the United States. She ran well with a bandaged leg and finished in fourth place in the final.

Thompson could hold on as the injury and rough treatment from the Japanese competitor had taken its toll and she was beginning to fade badly.

Rosenfeld, who had been running in last place, saw this and made a heroic effort to draw even with the youngster. For the last thirty yards, Bobbie stayed at her side, coaxing her into finishing, and letting Thompson take fourth place before her. Some were convinced that Rosenfeld could have won a medal but for her concern for her teammate. Indeed, as Gibb wrote: "Bobbie Rosenfeld's sportsmanship in this event was one of the high spots of the games."

In reviewing the race, Lou Marsh reported in his inimitable fashion:

> Under the circumstances Miss Thompson was in too fast company but she might have been up there if it hadn't been for that week's lay off with sore legs.
>
> At that, who would ever have thought that any girl in the world could have beaten Jean Thompson's best time by five full seconds? You have to hand it to this Radke girl, perhaps her legs wouldn't do for Mr. Ziegfeld's chorus, but they sure do burn up the alley.
>
> Misses Thompson and Rosenfeld were only beaten off 15 yards in 800 metres and both finished faster than Jean had ever done in Canada.
>
> Well, they lost and that's that, but anyway they score three points for Canada and the winner had to murder a mighty sweet record to grab the hot dogs, so too much can't be said for the great performance of Jean, who ran with a bandaged leg and Rosenfeld who jumped right out of the sprints into the longest race on the girls' program and grabbed points.
>
> Of course, the girls were disappointed, but figure this out. There were more behind them than in front of them. Penetang need feel no pangs of disgrace over Jean Thompson and Toronto should certainly feel no disgrace over Fanny Rosenfeld. . .

Because of her accomplishments in the 100 and 800 metres, Rosenfeld was sought out by reporters who wished to know more about the Canadian athlete. As usual, she made light of her achievements and told reporters, tongue-in-cheek, that she only trained twice a week because at 120 pounds she hadn't the strength to do more. And when she said she needed at least two pints of beer a day to keep her strength up, they were flabbergasted. Several months, later, however, she confided that "any girl who satisfactorily passes a medical examination and who accepts and practises correct methods of training is capable of running eight hundred metres or continuing any other usual athletic pursuit. The German and Japanese entries at Amsterdam did not experience any difficulty in the distance race, and even though I had not trained specially for it, there was no undue effort required to enable me to finish."

Rosenfeld's allusions to the 800 metres arose from the fact that some of the competitors in the event appeared to be all in at the finish and had thrown themselves down on the infield. As a result, male officials and reporters concluded that the event made "too great a call on feminine strength." Despite protestations that the behaviour of the athletes was not unreasonable after a middle-distance final, the International Amateur Athletic Federation voted to remove the event from the next Olympics. It was not to be reinstated until the 1960 Games in Rome.

On the face of it, the elimination of the 800 metres appeared to be the result of humanitarian concerns. Yet closer examination of the decision revealed a motive quite different and far more political. As one writer astutely put it:

> . . . It seemed that the Federation was bent on displaying its power — giving the women to understand that they were not yet in direct control. Things that needed attention were passed over; things that didn't need attention received much. To be frank there was considerable pussy-footing.

For those women involved in the athletic movement, the episode reinforced the conviction that in the future such decisions should be made by women in charge of women's athletics and not by the men who sat on the I.A.A.F.

The two heats in the 400-metres relay were held on Saturday, 4 August. The weather was typical of the entire Olympics — a steady downpour of rain almost obscured the events and "gave the track the appearance of an Irish bog." Nevertheless, the poor conditions did not hamper the Canadian team as they won their heat and qualified for the final with a new world's record of 49 ⅖ seconds.

For a sprint relay, the usual order is the fastest runner as the anchor, and the next best, who must also be a good starter, first. A good baton handler and curve runner should run the third leg and a good baton handler and straightaway runner should go second. Thus, it had been decided that Rosenfeld would start, Smith would run second, Bell, who ran well on the curve and could always chase someone, was third, and Cook would be the anchor. The four women had never run as a team until they arrived in Amsterdam.

The final of the 400-metres relay on 5 August coincided with the final track and field events of the Olympics. Interest was high in the relay because of the unfortunate incidents in the 100 metres where Cook of Canada and Schmidt of Germany had been disqualified, and Robinson of the U.S.A. had been involved in a controversial finish. When it was realized that Canada, Germany, and the United States would be in the final, and that Cook, Schmidt, and Robinson were running the anchor leg for their countries, the crowd was hopeful that each would be sent away on equal terms and that the question of supremacy would be settled.

"The day of the final it was almost unbearable," Gibb wrote. "And I think the most terrible place to be was in the competitors' stand where we watched our beloved team with their bright red Hudson's Bay blankets come out, wrap themselves up, and then take a few leg stretches up and down the grass." On the field, the pressure was no less intense. "We were keen to win because of Myrtle's previous disqualification," Bell remembered. "Well, we all felt we were going to win," Smith recalled. "We gotta win. Everything was for Canada. Not so much yourself — Canada came first."

When the official came with the numbers in a hat to determine lane selection:

> Bobby Rosenfeld made a flying dive to get into the hat first. And she drew the inside lane. We in the stand knew it immediately because she got so excited she jumped up and down and held her hand high in the air with one finger so that we would know the Canadians were getting a break in the luck at last.

Before taking their positions on the track, they embraced and wished each other luck. From her position, Jane Bell, the youngest member of the relay team, watched as the starters lined up. She was nervous, and the butterflies in her stomach reminded her that it was important for them to win and to prove to themselves and others that they were the best. Her bandaged leg recalled the injury that had prevented her from doing well in the 100 metres. The relay was a second chance to show that her selection to the team had been the right one.

Two years prior to the Amsterdam Olympics, sixteen-year-old Jane Bell had stood in front of her mirror before going to bed and said, "Good night Jane Bell, member of the 1928 Canadian Olympic Team." It was a technique suggested by her coach to convince herself that she was going to be on the team.

As a student at Toronto's Central High School of Commerce, she had earned a reputation as an outstanding athlete. In her second year, she was a member of the swim and basketball teams, and anchored the track team. She thought that sports were all that was important until she failed four subjects at Christmas and was put off all the teams until Easter exam results. "I had let the teams and myself down," she said. "They missed me."

Bell had always been a winner in sports. Yet she recognized that to accomplish anything worthwhile, sacrifice was necessary. She was prepared to make those sacrifices if it meant a place on the Olympic team. Years later she would chafe about how times had changed:

> I can't get over how the athletes today expect so much, from the government and everyone else, and I really and truly think that is why they aren't as great as we were, because they don't have the personal incentive we did. Everything is handed to them. We had far more commitment than they have today.

As a member of the Parkdale Ladies' Athletic Club, she was coached by Walter Knox. Under his guidance she developed into an excellent sprinter and hurdler. She was a close friend of Ethel Catherwood, another Parkdale member, and knew Cook, Smith, and Rosenfeld from running against them.

At eighteen, she was the second youngest on the team. She looked even younger because of her haircut, the "Eton crop", popular with teenagers at the time. She had an infectious smile and extroverted personality. She also possessed an independent streak. The high school swimming championships were scheduled for the night she was to leave for the Olympic trials in Halifax. Her coach, not wishing her to risk injury, forbade her to go. It was reported that she went anyway.

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The finish of the women's 400-metre relay. Myrtle Cook crosses the line ahead of Robinson of the United States to win the team's first gold medal in record time.

Her appointment to the Canadian women's team was a fulfillment of her two-year dream. But it had not been possible without an incentive and commitment. Further, it was an affirmation of her belief that "You can have anything you want if you want it badly enough and you're willing to sacrifice to get it."

The starter's pistol fired twice to indicate that someone had false started. It was Bobbie Rosenfeld. The disqualifications in the 100 metres were on everyone's mind and the crowd was quiet as the athletes were lined up for a second time. The start was good and Rosenfeld was slightly behind the American, in second place, when she handed the baton to Ethel Smith. The pass was clean and Smith "tore down the back course with her clothing and her hair flying back in the wind." She was able to hold her own against her American rival and the Candaians were still in second place when the third member of the team entered the race. When Bell received the baton she "ran like one possessed." As she rounded the final curve on the inside lane, she appeared to be chasing the runners in the outside tracks. But when she straightened out for the final handover to Myrtle Cook, she had given the Canadian team a three-yard lead.

In any relay, the baton must be passed within a 10-metre acceleration zone or disqualification results. When the incoming runner is 7 to 8 metres from the acceleration zone end line, the outgoing runner takes off at full speed so that no time is lost in the exchange. At Amsterdam, the Canadians used a piece of paper or handkerchief to mark the point, when reached by the incoming runner, as the signal for the outgoing runner to begin her acceleration prior to receiving the baton.

The first two exchanges had been perfect but the pass between Bell and Cook "was as near a flop as anything could be." It appeared that Cook would run out of the acceleration zone before Bell could catch her. Ethel Smith watched the drama from across the field and thought, "Jane will never catch you now Myrtle unless you slow up a bit." But Bell got her at the last possible moment and Cook was finally able to show why she was a record holder. She crossed the line five yards ahead of Robinson and the Canadians set a new world's record of 48⅖ seconds, breaking their old one of the day before by a full second.

> How did we feel when it was all over! I doubt if any of us can tell. All I remember is that there were smiles, tears, and gasps of relief, up in the competitors' stand where the Canadian group was watching the contest. Out in the field the four runners ran together from the four corners of the track and hugged each other with delight. At last we had won a first in the girls' section — a first which meant that the Canadian flag was going to the masthead. And after all, that was what we were there for and we had met with success after a week of hard luck and some disappointment. It was the last day of the Olympics for us and we had to win then if ever.

The relief in Alexandrine Gibb's comments was apparent. Indeed, the same feelings were present on the field where the four girls jumped up and down for joy so much that the cameraman, anxious to get their pictures, could hardly keep them still. For Myrtle Cook, the victory was especially sweet. Since Wednesday, the disappointment of the 100 metres had stayed with her, reminding her of what might have been. Now, all that was behind her and the memories of the past week had been replaced by the joyousness of the present. And as the Canadian red ensign was raised in the centre masthead to signify the victory of the women's relay team, the moment was forever imprinted on Jane Bell's memory. Over fifty years later she would remember:

> Of all the things that have happened to me in my life, many good things, I don't think I was ever as proud and as thrilled as when I stood and saw our flag going up and took a look and saw the four of us with tears.

The final event in the women's track and field program at the Olympics was the women's high jump. Beginning with twenty-three competitors, the women would continue to jump until only one remained. Each jumper would get three tries to clear a given height, and if unsuccessful they were out of the competition. After a successful jump, the bar would be raised and three more tries given at the new height. This continued until the athlete had three misses at a height, won the event, or decided not to jump anymore. Based on her past performances, the Canadian entry, Ethel Catherwood, was regarded as the clear favourite.

Ethel Catherwood's route to the women's Olympic team was a circuitous one. Born in North Dakota on 28 April 1908, she moved to Scott, Saskatchewan with her family when she was an infant. There she showed a proficiency in sports, excelling in hockey, basketball, and baseball. But it was her skill as a high jumper that marked her as no ordinary athlete.

In 1925, the Catherwoods moved to Saskatoon. Saskatchewan's second largest city had been undergoing a resurgence since the end of the war. As a hub of Western Canada's railway network, it had become a major distribution centre. The provincial university had been established there in 1907. For families such as the Catherwoods, Saskatoon provided economic and educational opportunities lacking in the smaller Saskatchewan communities.

Ethel enrolled as a senior student at Bedford Road Collegiate in September 1925. A month later, as a new student of unknown calibre, she startled the organizers of a high school meet by setting records in the high jump, 50 yard, 75 yard, and 100-yard dashes. She also won the running broad jump. When E.W. "Joe" Griffiths, Physical Director at the University of Saskatchewan, read a report of the track meet and her jump of five feet, he was incredulous. He went to Catherwood's home, met her parents, and watched her jump. He recognized "that she could jump five feet at

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The Canadian relay team after the victory. The photographer had difficulty getting the athletes to pose because they were so excited and happy. Left to right: Jane Bell, Myrtle Cook, Ethel Smith and Bobbie Rosenfeld.

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Ethel Catherwood, "The Saskatoon Lily", the most photographed woman athlete at the 1928 Olympics.

any time, and if her technique could be improved, she would be a world-beater."

It was decided that Griffiths would take charge of her training. A high-jump pit was constructed in a vacant lot at the back of his house, and every day he would travel across the city in his old Model T Ford to get her. The instruction she received in style complemented her natural ability, and within a week she was easily clearing the bar at 5′ 2″ — the unofficial world's record for women at the time.

The first good test of Catherwood's training occurred at the provincial meet in Regina on Labour Day, 1926. There she jumped 5′ 2 7/16″ and became the unofficial world champion. For the 1,500 cheering fans, this "was the most exciting athletic event that had happened in Regina." Yet the achievement went largely unnoticed in Eastern Canada. The Toronto and Montreal press were not interested in an unknown from Saskatoon. Thus, when the Women's Dominion Track and Field Championships were held at Toronto in August 1927, Griffiths was determined that she would be there to prove "that Saskatchewan had produced a woman jumper who had the stuff required for the Olympic Games." He approached the Saskatoon Elks Club who provided the money to send her to the meet.

An injury prevented her from doing her best. Nevertheless, her jump of 5′¼″ broke the Canadian record. At the Canadian National Exhibition two weeks later, she was in better form and set another new Canadian mark of 5′ 2″. It was the impression she made on those who saw her for the first time, however, that was notable.

Appearing in a snow-white jumping uniform and a purple cloak, she created a sensation. A report at the time described her:

> . . . Here was a type of athlete that few had expected to see. She isn't the sun-tanned muscular type of girl at all. Instead she presents more the appearance of a hothouse product — pretty — but somehow her appearance does not suggest any great strength of endurance, nor the ability to hurl herself over the bar at any great height. And coupled with these characteristics is the fact that she is soft spoken, shy and retiring.

Reporters scrambled for the right words to describe her. One bestowed the title "The Saskatoon Lily", and the name stuck.

Shortly after her return to Saskatoon, Catherwood received offers from athletic clubs and promoters encouraging her to move East. Indeed, Toronto afforded her training, competitive opportunities, and visibility unmatched in Saskatoon. When the Canadian Olympic Committee invited her to return, the matter was settled. She joined Teddy Oke's Parkdale Ladies' Athletic Club in Toronto. Oke, a former athlete and self-made millionaire, was well known for his sponsorship of women's sports teams. He found jobs for many female athletes in his brokerage offices throughout Ontario, and provided an education for others. When Catherwood became a Parkdale "Dolphinette", she was sent to business school. Oke hired Walter Knox, one of Canada's most accomplished athletes, to coach her. For Oke, Catherwood was his "dream" athlete around whom he planned to build a huge sports facility for women.

When the Olympic trials were held in Halifax, Catherwood again "captured the imagination of the bleachers." And when she set a world's record of 5′ 3″ in the high jump and a Canadian record in the javelin of 118′ 8″, the "Saskatoon Lily" was no longer an unknown athlete from Western Canada. Many were confidently predicting success for her at the Amsterdam Olympics. Catherwood's feelings about her chances were no less assured — "I know I can jump at least five three or five four and I am going to do it."

Ethel Smith remembered Catherwood as "a very introverted person. You could not get too friendly with her. She was a quiet girl . . . [who] never mixed very much." Jane Bell, who was probably closer to Catherwood than anyone else on the team, described

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Catherwood in training at Amsterdam, using the "scissors" technique to clear the bar in a sitting position.

her as "a very private person . . . [who] hated to go out in public." Yet her achievements as a jumper, together with her striking beauty, had made her a favourite of the reporters and photographers. She became the "most photographed girl at the Olympics." Whenever she practised, there was always a crowd of photographers about her who insisted on pictures. But the Olympics were not a beauty contest, and Catherwood was under no illusion as to why she was there. Also, this would be the first time in her career that she would be up against real competition.

The day of the high-jump final was cold and damp. Competition in the event would come from Wiley of the U.S. and Gisolf of Holland. As the afternoon wore on, and the competitors were gradually eliminated, Catherwood continued to show the graceful and perfect form which had brought her to Amsterdam. After each turn at jumping, she ran back to the big red Hudson's Bay blanket, and remained there comfortably wrapped up until her turn came to jump again. She did not remove her sweatsuit until the bar was above five feet. Then she missed. Off came the sweatsuit and she soared over the bar easily on the second attempt.

No Canadian officials had been allowed on the field during the competition. Consequently, she was alone as practically every other country had two jumpers entered. During the 800 metres and relay, the Canadian manager and chaperone had offered their services to the Belgian athletes as they had no one to look after them. The Belgian jumpers now returned the favour and sat beside Catherwood, made sure she was kept warm in her blanket, and took her spikes off after every jump and cleaned them of mud and sand.

In the stands, Canadian supporters were cheering her on with shouts of "C-A-N-A-D-A, Catherwood, Catherwood, Catherwood." Every time she jumped there was an audible indrawing of breath from the spectators in the stadium. For Catherwood's sister, Ginger, the competition was particularly unnerving. Each time Ethel jumped, Ginger would cover her eyes, afraid that the attempt would be a disaster. After almost three hours, the competition had been narrowed to Catherwood, Wiley, and Gisolf.

With the bar over five feet one inch, Catherwood established her supremacy in the high jump when she made the height and her competitors did not. It had taken her less than ten jumps to win a gold medal. She was then given an opportunity to attempt a new world's record of five feet three inches. On her third jump she was successful, but it was discovered that a sag in the bar had deprived her of the record. She was then given an opportunity of trying again. But by now she was tired and cold. She decided to wait for the British Empire meet in London later in the month and, hopefully, warmer weather.

The outburst which greeted Catherwood's victory equalled anything at the entire meet with the exception of Percy Williams' win in the 100 metres. Canadian athletes and spectators spilled onto the field and she was lifted onto the shoulders of her jubilant supporters. She had provided the best possible ending to the

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Catherwood's gold-medal jump at the games. She had been competing for three hours in cold, damp weather.

women's track and field events. In addition, her victory in the final stadium event was the perfect complement to Williams' success in the first.

The accomplishments of the Canadian women's team on the final day of the Stadium competition earned them the unofficial track and field championship. With 26 points, Canada had outscored its nearest competitor, the United States, by six points. Against teams from twenty other countries, some with as many as nineteen athletes, the six Canadian women proved that they were the best in the world. Every member of the team contributed points to the championship. As for Bobbie Rosenfeld:

> [she] . . . won more points than any other woman at the games. She got five points for second in the hundred and two for fifth in the 800 metres. Add six points for her part of the relay making a total of thirteen in all and she undoubtedly scored more points for us than any other competitor did for any country, either man or woman at the Olympics.

Now that their competition was over, the women were free from the rigours of training and curfews. Bell and Smith had dates with a couple of the Canadian rowers and had decided to explore the night life of Amsterdam. When they discovered that the men had to be in at 10 o'clock, the two women went back to a dance club where they met a couple of members of the New Westminster Salmon Bellies, the Canadian lacrosse team. "So we danced up there and they said let's take a hack back," recounted Smith. "We went looking for a horse and buggy and found one. It was all good clean fun. None of this sexy stuff. Anyway we didn't go to bed that night."

Bobbie Rosenfeld and others went to a small Dutch town to celebrate the relay victory. While there, their Dutch host tipped the orchestra leader to keep playing *The Maple Leaf Forever*. In one corner of the room a group of Germans kept coming stiffly to attention with each playing.

Because of their achievements, the women became the objects of intensive press coverage. One article entitled, "Oh, Horrors! A Short Man I Can't Go Out With Him," explained why Ethel Catherwood had a fear of being seen with a man shorter than herself. It went on to recount how "Miss Catherwood said she was shocked by the extensive cigarette smoking indulged in at London theatres by girls and women, which, she thinks, is a worse offence than 'making up' in public."

Other articles speculated about the future of Canada's Olympic champions: "From fields Olympian to movie stardom, from the realities of athletic conquests to the make-beliefs of screen battles is the journey that may be made by Myrtle Cook and Ethel Catherwood," ran one report. A Hollywood beauty specialist from Toronto said how impressed she had been with how well the two women had shown in pictures, and was confident they would "screen well in the movies." The fact that neither Catherwood nor Cook had any experience in acting seemed inconsequential.

When the delegates of the International Amateur Athletic Federation met on 7 August, however, Hollywood stardom for former Olympic champions was not an item on their agenda. They had gathered to decide the fate of the women's track and field events in future Olympics. Women had been admitted to the Amsterdam Olympics on a trial basis only, and many delegates remained unconvinced that the program should continue.

Three women representing the Federation Sportive Feminine International had been invited to express the opinion of their organization regarding female participation in subsequent Olympics. One of the women, Lady Heath of Great Britain, dramatically urged the male delegates to "let us help you raise our national banners on the Olympic pole. We are now your comrades and co-workers in industry, commerce, art and science, why not in athletics? If you approve of athletics for women at all you must approve of participation

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Sunnyside Amusement Park, Toronto, in the 1920s. It was here that "The Matchless Six" were feted upon their return to Canada.

in the Olympics, for women need the stimulus of matching their prowess against others of the world's best athletes quite as much as the men."

Some of the delegates were unmoved. They raised many of the old arguments — that women were not allowed in the ancient Greek Olympics and that competitive sport was injurious to women's health. This latter point had been the subject of a recent article in the Vatican's *Observatore Romano*, which had commented critically on the Olympiad and had singled out the competition for women as not always "appropriate to their natural dispositions . . ." To the first argument, Lady Heath replied that the hop, step, and jump, fencing, and pistol shooting were not present in the first Olympics either, but this did not prevent them from being added to the modern Games. The second concern was answered by the examining physician of the women athletes of Berlin. He said that his ten years of experience showed that women athletes got married and had children just as did non-athletes.

After spirited debate, the delegates voted 16-6 to retain the women's track and field events in the Olympic program. One of the six countries which voted in opposition had been the country whose women athletes had won the present Olympic women's track and field meet — Canada. As the Canadian representative on the I.A.A.F., Dr. A.S. Lamb was entitled to vote as he saw fit. Obviously, the achievements of the Canadian women had not changed his mind. But the significance of the vote was not lost on the international press. Further, it was a source of embarrassment to the country's female athletes and officials. Alexandrine Gibb, trying to make sense of Lamb's actions, was convinced that geography had played a part:

> Dr. Lamb comes from Montreal. In Montreal, competitive athletics for women are practically a minus quantity. This biggest city of Canada never had an outstanding woman athlete in track and field. It did not have a single representative at the final Olympic trials at Halifax. Undoubtedly, this was due to the objection that exists in Montreal against competitive sports for women. Every other eastern province was well represented but Quebec was simply out in the cold.

The vote was another wedge driven between the president of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and the officials in charge of the Canadian women's team. And when the two sides came together at the

Union's annual meeting in December, the controversial vote was hotly discussed and debated.

The women's team and the men's rowing team arrived at Quebec City in the early rainy morning of 25 August. Later when the *S.S. Laurentic*, "brilliantly lighted," steamed into Montreal hundreds of people thronged the wharf to greet them.

When their train arrived at Toronto's Union Station there were 200,000 people waiting. As the women climbed down the steps from the train onto the platform, carrying stuffed bears, dolls, and bunnies acquired on their trip, they were met by cheers, handshakes, and hats thrown into the air. When they reached the lower concourse, the band of the Queen's Own Rifles struck up *See the Conquering Hero Comes*, followed by *The Maple Leaf Forever*. To the strains of *Colonel Bogey* the procession then filed out to Front Street where the noise created by the thousands who had come to see them was deafening. The decorated floats and automobiles, numbering close to one hundred, and representing almost every sporting club and organization in the city, were lined up and waiting.

The procession was led by the carriage of the National Ladies' Club, drawn by a team of nine spirited gray horses. Next came the band of the Queen's Rangers and the police pipers. These were followed by the Toronto sports clubs, one after another. The women's team, wearing their Olympic uniforms, rode in two open cars, sitting high up on the top of the seats so that everyone could see them.

There was no point along the four-mile route that did not have its cheering people and honking autos. On Bay Street, confetti rained down on the athletes. Further on, the firemen of the Cowan Avenue station turned on their sirens to greet the victors when they passed.

For Bobbie Rosenfeld, this was her kind of event. "She knew every second person clear from the station to Sunnyside, every policeman and all the firemen, too. Living right up to her reputation, Bobbie had a different answer for every cheer." When they reached her place of work, the Patterson Chocolate Company, she saw her fellow workers cheering from every window and waving large white and green streamers in her honour. For one of the few times in her life, she was speechless. Somebody ran out and presented the women with boxes of chocolates which they threw to boys running alongside their car, to the press men behind, and to the mounted police.

The parade reached Sunnyside at 9:00 p.m. There to greet them was Mayor McBride, Premier Ferguson, and a happy cheering throng of 100,000 people. As the women lined up in front of the platform, the crowd burst into the song, *See Them Smiling Just Now*. It was so spontaneous and so unexpected, that the team could only stand in wonder, as the adulation of the multitude finally overwhelmed them. Regaining their composure, the women responded with the yell of the Olympic team and with "Canada, Canada, Canada — C-a-n-a-d-a — Canada."

The "Matchless Six" never competed in another Olympics. Ethel Smith married later that year and retired from active competition shortly thereafter. Within a year, Bobbie Rosenfeld was stricken with arthritis that kept her bed-ridden for eight months. The illness ultimately shortened her career. She became a sports columnist for the *Globe and Mail* and was chosen Canada's female athlete of the first half-century in December 1949 by the Canadian Press. Myrtle Cook married a reporter for the *Montreal Star*. She was soon offered a job as a sports columnist for the *Star* and became the women's sports editor in 1929. Jean Thompson withdrew from international competition when her coach persuaded her that after the Olympics there was nothing left to strive for. Jane Bell "couldn't psyche herself up again after the 1928 Olympics." She continued her education, graduating from the Margaret Eaton School of Physical Education in 1930.

Ethel Catherwood's life did not have the fairy tale ending that many assumed it would. Her career came to an end at the Canadian finals in 1931 when she placed third in the high jump. The same year, it was revealed that she had secretly married a Toronto bank clerk in 1929 and was filing for divorce. She moved to the United States where she became bitter and reclusive. She died in California in September 1987.

With the exception of Jane Bell, they are all gone now. Their accomplishments are largely forgotten. Yet for a brief moment they were responsible for a feeling of pride throughout the country — pride based on what a small team had accomplished against so many. And while they did not consider themselves pioneers, they were important in advancing the cause of women's participation in sport. They proved that the women's track and field program belonged in the Olympic Games and that gender should no longer be a criterion for competition. They were called the "Matchless Six", and the title was appropriate. No Canadian Olympic track and field team since — men or women — has been able to accomplish what they did during one historic week in August 1928. ♦

Ron Hotchkiss lives at Yarker, Ontario. His article on the burning of the Ottawa Parliament Buildings in 1916 appeared in the April/May 1992 issue.

BY WORD OF MOUTH • A PERSONAL MEMORY

A Teacher at Beautiful Meadow

By Ida Penner

Ida Hiebert was born near Plum Coulee, Manitoba, in 1903, the eleventh child of Jakob and Maria Hiebert, who farmed in the area.

She graduated from the high school at Winkler, Manitoba in 1921 and attended Normal School at Manitou, Manitoba, until 1922. She took further teacher training at the Winnipeg Normal School during summer sessions between 1924 and 1927. She taught in country schools around Winkler until 1933.

In 1934 she married Isaac Penner. They had five children. She resumed teaching in schools in the Winnipeg area in 1950, continuing until her retirement. In later life she took up painting. Recently she recalled her days at Normal School and as a young teacher in the 1920s.

The first requirement for anyone wishing to become a teacher is to take a teacher's training course. In 1921 I sent in my application to take four months of Normal School training in Manitou, a small town 35 miles west of Winkler in the Pembina Hills. The requirements were Grade 11 and 18 years of age. I had just finished high school with Mr. J.R. Wolkoff in Winkler and turned 18 in October. So I qualified and my application was accepted.

I had never lived way from home before. Father bought a new trunk for me to pack my belongings into. I still have that (new) old trunk, but the contents have changed. Then it was packed with things to wear such as my long underwear, a white flannelette nightgown, a woollen slip, stockings, shoes, and dresses etc. Now I keep family photos, cards from friends and family and cherished keepsakes from children and grandchildren in it. There are report cards, Sunday School Certificates, "I love you" articles made by five-year-olds and even a lock of my first baby's hair.

It was a memorable day back in October 1921 when I packed my trunk and set out for Manitou for normal training. Three of us girls, Sarah Enns and I from Winkler and Mary Bryson from Darlingford, found the same boarding place for $35.00 per month each with an older English couple. They had another boarder, a working man. Between the six of us we finished a big barrel of sauerkraut that winter.

We had a very good principal at school, Mr. J.W. Gordon. His way was to ask for volunteers to teach a class. This was a disadvantage to me because there were always others who volunteered so I could get out of it. The result was that at the end of the four months I and seven others had to stay seven more weeks at the school because he had not found out whether we could teach. I could not even go home in between sessions. I cried bitterly that night, gritted my teeth and stayed. But in those seven weeks I learned more than in the previous four months. He was like a father to me and gave me confidence "You can do it," he told me over and over again. I began to believe. Maybe I could. My blackboard writing improved. The Geography Lesson I had to teach in the public school was very well-done, he said. I left with my Third Class Teacher's Certificate.

To get my Second Class Teacher's Certificate I had to attend three summer schools. I graduated in 1927. For the Second Class Certificate we had to go to Winnipeg so I never again entered the halls of that stately building in Manitou where the direction for my life had been set.

The following year I was hired to teach in a small country school five miles south of my home in Winkler-Blumstein. This doesn't seem far now, but in those days the gravel roads were rough at best, and a mire when it rained. My father let me use his new car (one of the first) as long as the weather was favorable. In winter I boarded close to the school for $14.00 a month. My father picked me up on Friday and brought me back on Monday. The cars had no anti-freeze in those days so the water had to be drained every night after the first frost. I vividly recall him pouring water into the radiator early Monday mornings in sub-zero weather disregarding the discomfort of the water trickling down his sleeve. During the coldest winter months one of my brothers or sisters would pick me up with the horse and sleigh, unless there was a severe snowstorm. The weeks got very long if I had to stay at my boarding place for the weekend. I loved seeing my nieces and nephews and meeting my friends. Occasionally I walked home when a snowstorm cleared up unexpectedly.

On my first day as a teacher I tried to carry out what I had learned. Planning was one of my strong points. I got there early and put my plan on the side blackboard in great detail, showing how I was going to fill the minutes between 9 and 4 o'clock. It went something like this that first day:

A schoolyard singsong at Schoenwiese School, 1925. Ida Hiebert playing the guitar.

9:00-9:10 Opening exercises
9:10-9:20 Arith. with Gr I
9:20-9:30 Arith. with Gr II and so on
(there were 7 grades)
9:30-9:45 Recess etc. down to
3:30-4:00 German and/or religion

Finally I was ready. 9:00 o'clock came and went. No children arrived. I looked out the window to the east, then to the west. The prairie road led to some farm houses, but no children could I see coming. My timetable remained on the board. I went home.

The next day — still no pupils. I stayed at school from 9 to 4 and again went home. I was too shy to go and visit the people in the district to see why they didn't send their children to school. The third day children of two families came. The Public Health Nurse also visited the school. When she saw that some children had "school sores" (impetigo) she quarantined them. So Monday my first five stayed home with their sores, but fortunately five new ones came. Finally when all were coming, I had from 15 to 20 pupils.

The school was a one-room wooden building with three windows on each side and a round iron stove in the middle of the room. The stove was heated with wood and coal. Every day after the children were dismissed the room was tidied up and swept, not by the janitor, but by the teacher. Keeping the stove going was perhaps the most difficult part of my job. The coal bin was a large box built on the side of the school with a large cover on hinges. Every day before leaving I would have to lift the wooden lid, climb over the 4-ft. high side, fill my coal pail and then get out without spilling it. If I dumped in a pail of coal and closed all the drafts on the stove, the fire would not go out during the night. In the morning I would come early, crawl into the bin again to get coal and heat up the room before the children arrived. There was no such thing as turning up the thermostat in those days.

I enjoyed teaching children and influencing their lives. Wherever possible I got them to participate actively. Even the grade one class would tell stories to the rest of the school. Learning to perform for the class was important throughout the year but especially at the school Christmas Concert. I tried to arrange for every child to have a part in it. The entire community came to watch the Christmas Concert, even if it was three hours long. The children all received candy bags after the program.

I introduced a bit of nature study, showing the children how to identify wild flowers and birds. I knew all the wild flowers by name because a grade two teacher had taught me. The tedium of long boring buggy rides had often been lightened as my sister and I named the plants and birds along the way. I tried to pass an appreciation of nature on to my pupils.

Schoenwiese, where I taught for a time, means "beautiful meadow". It was truly a garden of wild flowers which we were allowed to pick in those days to make wreaths for May Day or Children's Day in church.

When the older boys would get fidgety while I was trying to teach music from notes I quickly picked up my guitar and we would have a singsong. This guitar was a real asset. Often I would meet with teenage girls in the evening to sing for fun. In Schoenwiese the community formed an orchestra. In every school district a young people's club started from these musical get-togethers. We also talked about God and the meaning of life.

I did not have too many problems disciplining the children. I hated spanking which was the accepted form of punishment in those days. My methods included writing sentences, begging pardon, or making the person stand at their seat. But these methods didn't always work. One dismally cold January day I had to punish four boys more severely. I made them each chop wood for five minutes. Then they had to think of a game to play with the others because it was too cold to go out for recess. It made for a good ending to a difficult day.

Before I got married in 1934 I taught in Blumstein, Schoenwiese, Edward and Valleyfield School Districts. In all my years of country school teaching, there was one thing I could not accomplish. I never managed to read many of the tempting story books that lined the shelves of these schools. The reason was, of course, that I had to prepare lessons every night for all seven grades. By the time that was done it was usually time to go to bed. Then I would get into my cozy flannelette nightgown, prop up the pillow behind me in bed, and before I got a few pages read, I'd fall asleep.

My love for books created tension between me and my parents. Although my mother also had a desire to read, work always came first. Saturday chores waiting for me when I came home for weekends were washing all the floors, baking or sewing. Often I would also help one of my nine older siblings with their growing families. In the evening I would go to choir practice and Sunday I taught Sunday School. Not much time for reading, but I always tried to squeeze it in. We almost came to blows over the following incident.

I hadn't been teaching long when a World Book Encyclopedia salesman came to visit me at my school. It didn't take him long to convince me what a valuable asset these books would be for my teaching. So I bought them on the installment plan since I only made $80.00 a month. When I told my father about these good books he was very disgusted. He had generously allowed me to keep all my wages, which was very unusual in the 1920s. Young people were expected to give their money home till they got married. Also, he had planned

Ida Hiebert, around 1925.

Schoolyard games, Schoenwiese school, 1927.

to buy me a good horse when I turned 21 — this was sort of a tradition. Each of his daughters got a horse and a cow when they got married or turned 21, whichever came first. It would be equivalent to buying a car for your 16-year-old today. He was furious that I had squandered my money on a set of encyclopedias. So I suggested a compromise. If I could keep the books, he didn't have to buy me a horse. I forfeited a horse for a set of encyclopedias! It seemed a bitter trade-off at the time but, looking back, it was a wise choice. Horses were replaced by cars shortly thereafter. My encyclopedias were useful not only during my years of teaching, but my own children had this valuable resource available throughout their schooldays.

I enjoyed teaching and becoming part of the community. Lasting friendships were formed. We worked hard and enjoyed life! ♦

Ida (Hiebert) Penner lives in Winnipeg and recently celebrated her 90th birthday. This is one of an occasional series of personal recollections, "by word of mouth".

A Bumper Crop

Allan Levine Looks At Fall Books

Pierre Trudeau always has been one step ahead of the times. When he finally decided to tell the fascinating story of his life in his own words, it was only natural that he first chose television as the medium to present his memoirs. But as soon as he sat down for several lengthy interviews, he discovered that he had to research some of the many complex issues he was involved in during his nearly sixteen-year reign as prime minister. He was assisted by his friend Gerard Pelletier, his last principal secretary Tom Axworthy, and former *Toronto Star* editor George Radwanski, author of a 1978 biography of Trudeau. Thus was born *Memoirs* to be published by McClelland & Stewart in November — the firm is rumoured to have paid Trudeau an advance close to $500,000 — a collaborative effort that will undoubtedly be the most-talked-about book this fall. The film version directed by Brian McKenna will be broadcast on the CBC early in 1994.

Historians and students of history, however, should not expect any astonishing revelations. "It is personal and his view of things," says publisher Douglas Gibson, who is editing the book. "The picture [of Trudeau] that emerges is not radically different from the persona presented in other Trudeau books." Moreover, *Memoirs* is very much a "political" book; typically Trudeau does not reveal much about his private life and his relationship with his former wife Margaret. At the same time, Gibson adds, the book fills in gaps about Trudeau's early life and contains numerous photographs, most of which have been culled from the former prime minister's private collection.

Besides Trudeau, several biographies of historical note will also be published this fall. David Bercuson examines the life of Brooke Claxton, a political genius who did the bidding of Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent. Claxton belonged to an age when serving in the government was still regarded as a high calling and the patriotic duty of every Canadian son.

The exploits of New Brunswick business tycoon, K.C. Irving, are chronicled by Douglas How and Ralph Costello, while at the other end of the spectrum, University of Guelph political scientist William Christian analyzes the work and thoughts of philosopher George Grant. The lives of three important Canadian women are also profiled. Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis take another look at suffragist Nellie McClung in *Firing the Heather; The Life and Times of Nellie McClung*, while S.P. Lewis offers a glimpse of J.S. Woodsworth's daughter Grace MacInnis, the first woman elected to the B.C. legislature. And in a book that is sure to be controversial, former Manitoba Liberal leader Sharon Carstairs supposedly tells us about Meech Lake and other behind-the-scenes manoeuverings in her memoirs, *Not One of the Boys*.

Finally two unique biographies that should be interesting are *Langstaff: A Nineteenth-Century Medical Life* by Queen's University medical historian Jacalyn Duffin, the story of "an ordinary physician and his community during a period of revolutionary medical change." Utilizing Dr. James Langstaff's extensive records, Duffin paints a fascinating picture of how medicine was practised during the latter 1800s. And for baseball fans, Phil Marchildon (with Brian Kendall), a Canadian pitching sensation who played for the Philadelphia Athletics in the 1940s and 1950s recounts what it was like to face Ted Williams and Joe DiMaggio.

There are several "big" history books this season. The University of Toronto Press has the final volume of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*. This installment, the middle book in the series, looks at the dramatic growth of the country from 1800 to 1891. As well, U of T will be publishing Volume XIII of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* that documents the lives of Canadians who died in the first decade of the twentieth century. There is no more important historical reference work than the DCB.

Pierre Berton follows up his popular history of Niagara Falls published last year, with a large book of the Falls' history in photographs. And in a book that was ten years in the making, the team of Roger Hall, Gordon Dodds, and Stanley Triggs have assembled *The World of William Notman*. In brilliant pic-

tures, it chronicles the history of Canada and the United States as seen by this successful and inventive nineteenth-century Montreal photographer.

The 1837 rebellion in Lower Canada is revisited by University of Toronto historian Allan Greer in *The Patriots and the People*. Greer argues that the habitants were more active in responding to democratic appeals than has been generally accepted in other historical works on this subject. Other pre-Confederation books include, *Legacies of Fear: Law and Politics in Quebec in the Era of the French Revolution* by F. Murray Greenwood, that provides some answers about the roots of English-French relations in Canada; and *Riots in New Brunswick: Orange Nativism and Social Violence in the 1840s* by Scott See, a professor of history at the University of Vermont, which examines in detail Irish Catholic-Protestant tension in the mid-nineteenth century.

Professors Jack Granatstein and Desmond Morton continue to churn out more military history. This time Granatstein has written a collective biography of Canada's Second World War Generals, while Morton returns to the First World War with *When Your Number's Up*, a chronicle of the lives of Canadian soldiers in the trenches. Of equal interest is *Best-Kept Secret* by journalist John Bryden that exposes the story of Canadian secret intelligence during the Second World War; and *Canada and her Enemies* by historian Graeme Mount, a highly original study of the early Canadian spy business.

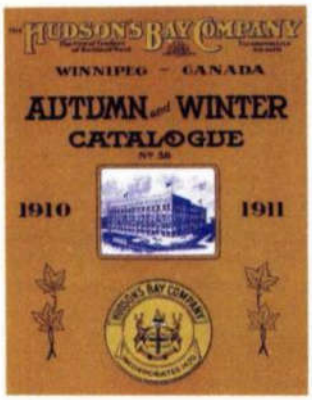
Aboriginal fishing rights on the Pacific coast are the subject of UBC history professor Dianne Newell's *Tangled Webs*, and in what should be a very noteworthy book, Ovide Mercredi, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, and Mary Ellen Turpel, a professor of law at Dalhousie, offer their unique perspective on native history and self-government, among other topics. Readers of *The Beaver* may also be interested in the story of B.C.'s Nisga'a as told by their tribal council as well as archaeologist William Wardill's *An Unremembered Place*, a profile of a forgotten nineteenth-century Saskatchewan Métis village.

In what may be the best book yet written about the history of a Canadian bank (in Michael Bliss's view, at any rate), Duncan McDowell traces the 125-year saga of the Royal Bank in *Quick to the Frontier*. Further east from Bay Street, Chesely Sanger of Memorial University has written the definitive history of commercial whaling.

Not surprisingly, the constitutional wars are the subject of several books. University of Toronto political scientist Peter Russell, an expert on this complex issue, offers an updated edition of his last year's work, *Constitutional Odyssey*, a clearly-written historical primer. More recent events are examined by two of the *Globe and Mail*'s journalists. In *United We Fall*, Susan Delacourt dissects the "no" vote in the Charlottetown referendum, while columnist Jeffrey Simpson goes beyond the constitution to what the future holds in *Faultlines: Struggling for a Canadian Vision*.

Two books look at the intriguing relationship between the men and women of the Canadian news media and the country's politicians. In *Reporting the Nation's Business*, Patrick Brennan of the University of Calgary's history department has turned his Ph.D. thesis into book form. Brennan focuses on the interplay between the Liberal governments of King and St. Laurent and the five most influential writers of the 1935 to 1957 period: Grant Dexter of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, George Ferguson of the *Free Press* (later the *Montreal Star*), Blair Fraser of

GIFTS FROM THE PAST



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(See tax information on page 48)

Steamer *Northcote* at Fort Edmonton, 1875

BY PETER RINDLISBACHER

This splendid evocation of the pioneer Canadian West is the first in a series of paintings of historic prairie steamers by the distinguished Canadian marine artist Peter Rindlisbacher.

The painting shows the famous Hudson's Bay Company vessel *Northcote* making its first visit to the HBC post at what is now the site of the city of Edmonton, Alberta, 10 years before the steamer's dramatic role at the Battle of Batoche in the North-West Rebellion.

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The Beaver

December/January

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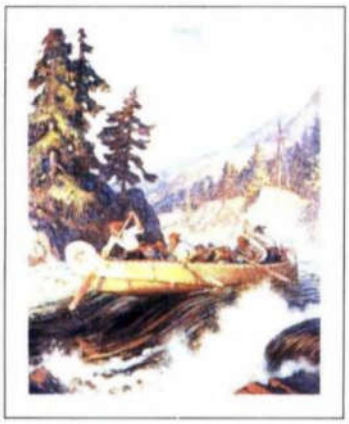
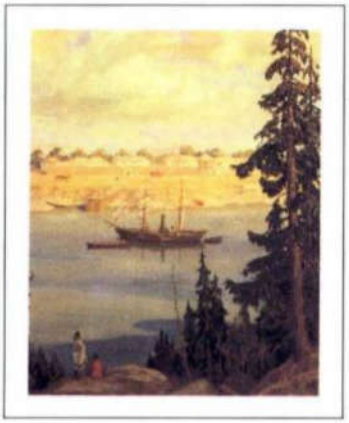
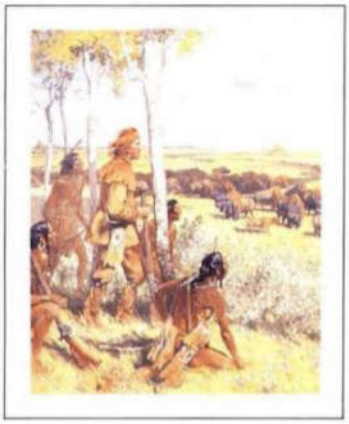
Historic Paintings by popular demand



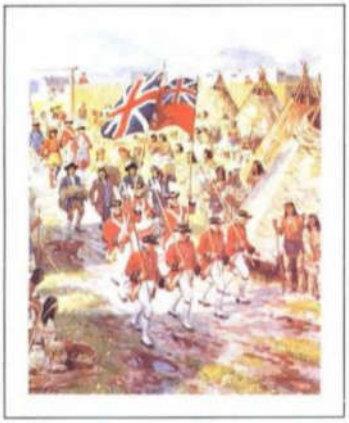
A. *Chief Trader Archibald McDonald Descending the Fraser*
By A. Sherriff Scott.



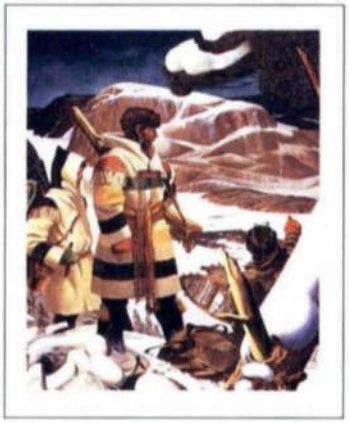
B. *S.S. "Beaver" Off Fort Victoria*
By A. Sherriff Scott.



C. *Kelsey Sees the Buffalo*
By C.W. Jefferys.



D. *Trading Ceremony at York Factory*
By A. Sherriff Scott.



E. *R.M. Ballantyne and Chief Trader George Barnston at Tadoussac, 1846*
By Charles Comfort.

F. *Battle in the Bay, 1697*
By Norman Wilkinson.

Over the years the Hudson's Bay Company has commissioned distinguished Canadian painters to create works depicting important events in the long history of the Company. Among the most popular works in the HBC collection are those pictured above by C.W. Jefferys, A. Sherriff Scott, Norman Wilkinson and Charles Comfort.

The Beaver is now offering quality reproductions of these works. These four-colour prints are sized 12½" x 16½", printed on fine stock and are suitable for framing. They are priced at **$11.98 each.**

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Maclean's, Ken Wilson of the *Financial Post* and Bruce Hutchison, who during this period mainly worked for the *Free Press* and *Maclean's*.

And in *Scrum Wars: The Prime Ministers and the Media* (if readers will allow me), I look at the turbulent but fascinating relations between the press and prime ministers from Macdonald to Mulroney. It is a study which shows how partisanship, business decisions, radio, television and personalities all shaped the way the news from Ottawa has been transmitted across the country.

Other new books which should appeal to readers of history include: *The Sound of War*, an account of veteran journalist Peter Stursberg's experiences as a CBC war correspondent during the Second World War; Ted Magder's *Canada's Hollywood: The Canadian State and Feature Films*, the history of the Canadian film industry; *The Canadian Cowboy*, another anecdotal book from Andy Russell which tell of the migration of North American cowboys from New Mexico to Alberta (according to Douglas Gibson of M&S, Russell's last book *Grizzly Country: Memoirs of a Mountain Man* has sold more than 250,000 copies); and for visitors to the West Coast, Rosemary Neering has *A Traveller's Guide to Historic British Columbia*.

All in all it should be a fine literary season indeed. ◆

Allan Levine is a Winnipeg historian and writer.

THE BEAVER

A Gift
That Lasts
All Year

Rae of the Arctic

By William Barr

NO ORDINARY JOURNEY
John Rae, Arctic Explorer
1813-1893.

By Ian Bunyan, Jenni Calder, Dale Idiens and Bryce Wilson. Edinburgh, Montreal and Kingston: National Museums of Scotland and McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993. 116 pp., illus. $42.95 (cloth), $19.95 (paper).

Dr. John Rae's place in the history books is well deserved. He is probably unrivalled for his achievements as a long-distance walker, both in summer and, on showshoes, in winter. In this regard he is probably best known for his trip on showshoes from Red River (Fort Garry) to Sault-Ste-Marie between early January and 3 March 1845, a distance of some 1,900 km. During his arctic expeditions he explored and mapped some 2,800 km of previously unexplored territory, including almost 2,500 km of new arctic coastline, particularly in the areas of Melville Peninsula, Committee Bay, Boothia Peninsula and Pelly Bay. But undoubtedly he is best known for the fact that in April 1854 at Pelly Bay he obtained from a group of Inuit the first news of the fate of the Franklin expedition, missing since 1845, namely that a large group of Europeans had starved to death west of a large river a long way off. Later that same year, at Repulse Bay, he obtained from other Inuit more details as to the deaths of these strangers and acquired a range of items (silverware, watches, etc.) which had belonged to members of Franklin's expedition. But in terms of things that matter (rather then sensationalism) Rae's real claim to fame is that he was one of the first Northern explorers in North America to adopt the technique of "living off the land", *i.e.* of supporting himself and a small party by hunting and fishing to the extent that he was able to stay in the field almost indefinitely. Probably no later explorer, not even Vilhjalmur Stefansson, would have claimed to have surpassed Rae in this area of expertise.

To commemorate the centennial of Rae's death in 1893 the National Museums of Scotland and the Orkney Museums Service have assembled an exhibition celebrating the life and achievements of this remarkable man, which will be shown in Orkney, Edinburgh and Canada. The book *No Ordinary Journey* was planned and published in connection with the exhibition.

The book consists of six main segments: "Childhood in Orkney", written by Bryce Wilson; "Early arctic exploration" by Ian Bunyan; "Rae in the Arctic" by Jenni Calder; and "Rae and the native Canadians" and "Rae as collector and ethnographer" by Dale Idiens. A list of leading figures in arctic exploration, 1817-1860, and a chronology of John Rae's expeditions complete the work.

In terms of the content four of these segments are excellent, especially Bryce Wilson's evocative study "Childhood in Orkney". The unfortunate exception to the general high standard is Ian Bunyan's piece on "Early arctic exploration", which is badly flawed by careless research and muddled writing. A few examples will demonstrate how badly flawed this section is. On Parry's second voyage Lieutenant George Francis Lyon (*not* Lieutenant George Francis) was captain of HMS *Hecla* (*not* H.M.S. *Fury*). On Parry's third voyage Lieutenant Joseph Sherer (*not* Shere) took part

in the sledging trips. On John Ross's second expedition it was his nephew James Clark Ross (*not* John Ross himself) who first reached King William Island. Fort Enterprise, Franklin's winter quarters on his first expedition, was built at the west end of Winter Lake in the Snare River drainage, *not* at the junction of the Coppermine and Yellowknife rivers. The latter location, of course does not exist, since the Yellowknife and Coppermine are separated by a low, but important divide. The sponsor of the American contribution to the 1850-51 searches for Franklin was Henry Grinnell *not* Grinell, and the ships he provided, *Advance* and *Rescue* were hermaphrodite brigs, *not* schooners. Belcher's squadron sailed for the Arctic in 1852 *not* 1850 and in 1853-54 five ships were abandoned in the Arctic *not* six. Probably the worst example of Mr. Bunyan's muddled writing is his version of Lieutenant Bedford Pim's rescue of the officers and men of *Investigator* at Mercy Bay, which is so badly distorted (or clumsily telescoped) as to be totally unrecognizable: "In February 1853 McClure abandoned *Investigator* and was trying to find help when he ran into the Belcher expedition". These are only a few of Bunyan's more glaring gaffes.

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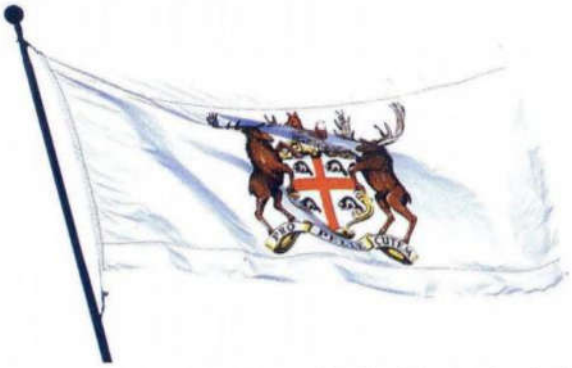
Flags of the Adventurers



Now the familiar "house flag" of the Hudson's Bay Company, the white banner bearing the famous HBC coat-of-arms has a long and dramatic history. It flew over ships of the Company's sailing fleet that left Gravesend for Hudson Bay in 1767 and it continued to identify Company vessels until the late eighteen hundreds. In this century it has been the standard of the HBC Governors and, since the 1970s, the Honourable Company's official flag. Now this fine 3 ft. x 6 ft. flag is available in weather-resistant nylon as a special limited offer to readers of *The Beaver.*

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From the great days of the fur trade until the Company was reorganized in the 1970s, the Hudson's Bay Company conducted its far-flung business and trading activities under its own distinctive Company flag, the familiar red ensign with the HBC initials in the fly. Now this historic flag is for sale to collectors and fur trade history enthusiasts who read *The Beaver.* This fine 3 ft. x 6 ft. flag, suitable for display, is made of weather-resistant nylon.

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By contrast all the other sections are sound and informative and reflect well on the authors and the publishers. In terms of setting the scene, they all deserve a better background than Bunyan's shoddy piece of writing.

The book is superbly illustrated with photos, both in colour and black-and-white, of the Orkneys and the Canadian Arctic, with reproductions of exquisite paintings and drawings by relevant arctic explorers, and with a fine series of maps showing Rae's travels. Also illustrated are native artifacts collected by Rae, and some of Rae's own belongings. If there is a criticism which one might level at the illustrations it is that the captions in a number of cases might be improved. For example, in the caption of a superb aerial view (in colour) of some of the labyrinthine islands and headlands in Bathurst Inlet, we are told rather fatuously that "it was visited by several expeditions", totally overlooking the fact that it was the delay caused by the charting of this labyrinth which led to Franklin's disastrous overland retreat during his first expedition.

Clearly this is not the definitive work on the life and achievements of John Rae. But for those lucky enough to visit the exhibition which it was designed to accompany, it will undoubtedly add enormously to that experience. And when the definitive biography is written, this little book (with the exception of the section on early arctic exploration) will, one hopes, provide fruitful inspiration on aspects such as Rae's interaction with the indigenous people, and his role as ethnographer and collector. ♦

William Barr is Professor of Geography at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, and a prodigious writer on arctic exploration and history.

THE PACKET

Letters, Notes and Opinion

Finding a Leader

Having attended as a reporter or observer almost every national political party leadership convention between King's retirement and Mulroney's accession, I can only say that your Explorations essay in the June/July 1993 issue [A Question of Leadership] should be reprinted and broadcast in all Canadian media. It has badly needed exposure and I can only hope that the issue is taken up by those with a concern for Canadian politics and government.

Mackenzie King may have started the trend toward Americanization, but Keith Davey and his friends were among the biggest pushers. As a speech writer and campaign assistant to Mike Pearson I saw at first hand some of the off-shoots

which, used during campaigning after the conventions, nearly did in the chosen leader. Having been associated with Keith when I was public relations assistant to the Liberal leader in Ontario, I know as a fact that Davey and Gordon Dryden, who later became a big national Liberal fund-raiser and treasurer, attended American conventions and brought heavy influence on their party to follow the same procedures and hoop-la in Canada. Other parties followed suit.

I have been covering political gatherings since 1935, for much of the time as a newspaper reporter and former president of the Ontario gallery and member of the Ottawa parliamentary gallery. Later, from 1958 until 1972, I acted as a campaign advisor federally in four provinces and so attended provincial conventions as well as federal. With Louis St. Laurent, it was surely a leader chosen as first among equals, the same was true for Pearson and Trudeau. In the provinces, Louis Robichaud, Alex Campbell, John Robarts, Robert Bourassa were natural leaders who would have been chosen by their own caucuses. I doubt that most of the others would have been, and the results have been clear. My familiarity with the Western provinces is insufficient for me to make a judgement. And I say this having been a strong supporter of John Turner whom I have known personally since he was a Young Liberal from Montreal.

In the recent Tory race I saw Charest as a potential leader who would be chosen by his confréres in parliament should his party win an election, but he obviously needs the seasoning which opposition would allow. Otherwise, the race was ridiculous, with packed local conventions sending delegates who have no more right to be choosing leaders than selecting popes.

Maybe, as you write, caucus leadership selection is too subtle for the times, but my own experience on both sides of the political world suggests it could still be done. However, I fear that will not happen and, as you argue, another way must be found. Perhaps the leadership conventions might be held after parties were elected to government from among candidates chosen from the elected membership, with the right to look outside the caucus to someone prepared to stand then for a seat and thus face the common voters for approval. The likelihood, of course, would be that whoever led the party

to power would be the inside choice as well as the outside.

As I recall, the power to select and dismiss leaders held by the caucus had worked well over time with British parliaments. When the likes of Disraeli and Gladstone were in and out, the quality of government certainly didn't suffer and, as you mention, the long terms given some Canadian leaders certainly suggests that instability would not result. The leaders you mention certainly were given caucus and party support over and over again because they were strong leaders in the House and out.

I hope you are right in believing that the current system is on the way out. If it isn't then we'll simply become a full part of the American system with all that entails.

J.E. Belliveau,
Shediac,
New Brunswick.

Well Done

The General Blakeney/
St. Christopher seal

Let me thank you for publishing my letter in your journal and for forwarding on to me photocopies from *The Beaver* and the galleys from your correspondents' replies.

Of all the inquiries made both here and in the U.K. *The Beaver* and its correspondents were the first to offer a rational solution. Since then the British Museum has confirmed the views expressed.

My belief that the portrait was that of an explorer and the reverse perhaps a missionary probably misled people when I made my initial inquiries.

Once again, thank you for your interest and full marks to your correspondents for the trouble they took to reply.

Bryan O'Driscoll,
Hobart, Tasmania,
Australia.

Eyewitness Account

As a survivor of the Regina Cyclone, I was much interested in the article in the June/July 1993 issue of *The Beaver*.

My parents, Percy and Hattie Gordon, lived at 2035 Smith Street, where I was born in September 1911. Throughout my childhood I listened to the adults talk about the cyclone.

House #8 on the chart — it faced Victoria Avenue — was the home of Norman Mackenzie and his wife. I remember them both well. Their experience is a story which I heard told many times. Mr. Mackenzie (the Art Gallery was named after him) was a portly man — of such a size that his clothes could not be bought "off the rack". He was always impeccably dressed in suits which were tailor made to accommodate his size. When the cyclone struck, Norman Mackenzie was in the bath tub, unhurt; but all his clothes had blown away.

Then, there is the story of a man who was canoeing on Wascana Lake. The canoe and its occupant were deposited on the north side of the park.

I think it was in the 2100 block of Smith Street that Barbara Lecky, a newborn baby, and her mother, were still together in bed, but in the middle of the street.

My own story, in part, is that when the cyclone had passed, there were no walls left on the house, and I was sitting in my pram in the middle of the living room, untouched by flying glass and debris which had injured my mother. A piece of sheet music was still on the piano — its title "O Perfect Day".

Helen Gordon Venables,
Ottawa,
Ontario.

The editor of "The Beaver" welcomes contributions to The Packet. Comments on articles, observations on historic events and fresh information from unpublished sources are particularly encouraged. Letters may be edited for length.

Hoose, Moose

My husband and I were both amused by J.A. Davidson's article "Talking Funny" [*The Beaver*, June/July 1993], a good lesson in Canadianese.

I had hoped he would include the Nova Scotian way of pronouncing "aunt", to rhyme with "taunt" and "father" to rhyme with "lather". As the way they say these words are more like the way they are spelled, perhaps the Nova Scotians have it right.

We were in Australia earlier this year and our Aussie friends teased us by saying "hoose, moose and caffee". I tried to give them a lesson in "Canadian" by saying "Repeat after me: ouch, house, mouse and awful coffee". Still they failed to hear our nuance, the Canadian shading of these particular words. Of course, the same thing happens when we travel to the States.

I give up!

In spite of the teasing, they all say they love our accents so we see no reason for trying to change. We doubt very much we could if we tried. We also are not afraid of American TV changing our way of speaking English. The American networks like our language, otherwise why would they have wanted Peter Mansbridge to add to their already enlisted Canadian announcers?

Let's all speak Canadianese, eh?

Bernice Laing,
Matsqui,
British Columbia.

The Past as Literature

Who would have predicted it in these fast-forward times: the novel of history is coming back.

What's back? Not so much the traditional historical romance, where fictional characters stand against the "authentic" backdrop of some great event from history. That kind of historical novel may not be very respected these days — critics tend to dismiss it as costume fiction — but it never went away. Particularly in work for young adult readers, it still produces some fine work. And it has always been popular. Publishers are always ready to proclaim some thick historical saga as being "in the tradition of James Michener".

What's fresh is the way many of the country's most literary writers have been taking up historical themes. Increasingly, Canada's most eminent or most promising novelists, short-story writers and poets are grappling with material from the Canadian past. Anyone who claims history is vanishing or becoming irrelevant should consider how our best writers seem to be deciding it is the subject they must engage.

Serious fiction about Canadian history goes back at least as far as *Barometer Rising*, of course, and works by such writers as Rudy Wiebe, Brian Moore, and Antonine Maillet have maintained the tradition. It's been said that all the novels of recent Booker Award winner Michael Ondaatje are historical — though only one, *In the Skin of a Lion*, is set in Canada.

Lately, that literary stream has been broadening to a flood. Early in 1993, John Steffler won a first-novel prize for *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*, set in the Labrador of the 1770s. Audrey Thomas's family-history novel *Graven Images* appeared recently, and this fall will see the publication of *Away*, a story of Irish immigrants to Canada by Jane Urquhart, who has already earned international acclaim for two other novels set in nineteenth-century Ontario. The title character of Douglas Glover's recent *The Life and Times of Captain N.* is a Loyalist fighting in the American Revolution. George Bowering will soon publish *Shoot*, his third novel dealing with characters, real and imagined, from British Columbia history. And so on. . . .

Recently I spoke with some of these novelists, to inquire what it is that is turning our writers to historical themes.

For Douglas Glover, the reason is straightforward. Glover's roots lie in the Loyalist communities of Ontario's Grand River and *The Life and Times of Captain N.* is dedicated to his young son Jacob, who bears the name of a Loyalist ancestor. Glover has no doubt that Loyalist traits shaped the attitudes he grew up with. "I think history defines people," says Glover, who in his short stories has at times found himself supplying "potted histories" for his characters. "I find myself looking for the messages that are passed on. The trauma of the American Revolution really did shape the community I come from — and English Canada too."

Captain N. is no genteel salute to the unity of empire. It is breathtakingly violent, with dead babies and spattered brains on the first few pages. No one in it acts from staunch principles of loyalty to King and Empire. Young Oskar, who narrates much of the story (in a remarkable

THE READERS' CHOICE SURVEY

Beaver columnist Christopher Moore wants to know: What's the best book about Canada and its history you have read lately?

Last year we surveyed writers and historians about *their* favorite books [see *The Beaver*, February/March 1993]. This year we are asking *Beaver* readers to make the nominations.

We want to hear about a book that has impressed you. It should be history, though an historically-based novel or film or play could qualify too, and preferably recent (though an old book you recently discovered could do). Christopher Moore will report on the best suggestions in the February/March 1994 issue of *The Beaver*.

We have prizes. Courtesy of the University of Toronto Press, we will offer a copy of the magnificent ***Historical Atlas of Canada*** to a winning suggestion. Other published suggestions will be rewarded with copies of Peter C. Newman's ***Empire of the Bay.***

To enter, mail or fax the title and author's name of your selection to *Reader's Choice*, **The Beaver**, along with a sentence or two about your choice and why you liked it. Deadline: Monday, 15 November 1993.

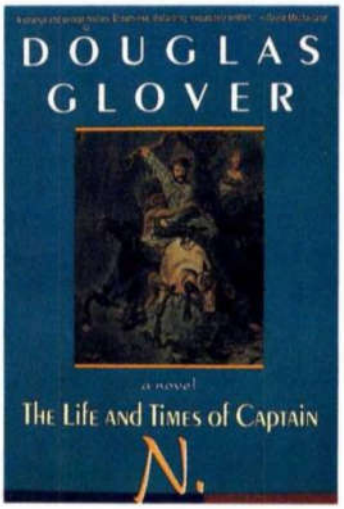
eighteenth-century voice of Glover's own devising), scribbles fawning messages for George Washington even when he's leading a hell-for-leather band of Loyalist guerrillas. But Glover points to Oskar's father, the Loyalist leader Captain Nellis. In accepting defeat, and life in Canada, Nellis acknowledges that the future is passing him by.

"That's very ideological," says Glover. "Right there, Canada turned away from liberal democracy, with no alternative in mind. It is one of the oddities of Anglo-Canadian character: we took up conservatism without a project." *Captain N.*, in other words, is a novel with large views about Canadian history and Canadian character. Indeed, few contemporary historians would dare link the distant past so directly to modern Canadian character traits.

Poet John Steffler's motives were different when he began writing about Labrador fur-trader and empire builder George Cartwright. "The history section of my personal library, you might say, is not large," he says. His novel was written not to revive the eighteenth century, but simply as an imaginative response to Cartwright's published journal, which Steffler encountered when he went to Newfoundland to teach. He calls it a book about a book, and he happily changed history to suit his own purposes. Much of the book, in fact, follows Cartwright's restless, timeless ghost, sometimes right into the present.

Steffler stresses he has never had any ambition to be an historical novelist, but he is not immune to history's lessons and analogies. He grew up in rural Ontario in the 1950s and 1960s and attended a one-room school where some kids arrived on horseback. That whole community, even its landscape and place names, has now vanished under the suburbs and industrial malls of greater Toronto. In fact, the developers of Scarborough have done to his home much what George Cartwright did to parts of Labrador. "The people who came like him obliterated the people and the names that had been there before in just the same way." Since Cartwright and his book express attitudes that remain powerful and troubling today, Steffler reflects on timelessness as much as change.

"Some days I get tempted to chuck what I am and become an historian," laughs George Bowering. "I would love being an historian — at least for the research side." Bowering is actually a professor of English and a distinguished poet and critic, and his fiction is hardly what a lot of historians would consider history. Some of them were apoplectic when Bowering won the 1980 Governor General's Award for *Burning Water*, a novel about George Vancouver that is far from slavish to the documentary record. And his 1987 novel *Caprice*, about a young woman from Quebec who rides into B.C. in the 1890s seeking revenge on the gunfighter who killed her brother, is an affectionate parody of the Western more than a conventional historical novel. Bowering says his forthcoming novel, *Shoot*, will be less funny, less "made up." Its subject, the outlaw McLean Boys of Kamloops, means a lot to him, for stories of their exploits were part of his own childhood. Still, it's unlikely anything Bowering writes will read like an old-fashioned historical novel.



Bowering thinks Western Canadian writers have been compelled to dig into history just because no one else did. Another West Coast poet and novelist, Daphne Marlatt, puts even more emphasis on what history denies and covers up. Her 1988 novel *Ana Historic* concerns a contemporary woman, Annie, who is trying to write about Mrs. Richards, "a woman with no history" who appears briefly in the records of early Vancouver. Nearly everything about Mrs. Richards is unknown, and Annie's history-professor husband keeps telling her that history must be built from facts. History, concludes one of Marlatt's characters, is the story the city fathers tell — while the real history of women goes on unknown.

Ana Historic insists that what has been left out of history is important — even if only imagination can retrieve it. The novel is referring specifically to the history of women, but that ambition seems common to all the novelists: to find personal meaning in the past and to engage with lives and events rather than accept the bloodless abstractions of official history.

Since that ambition is also shared by many historians, particularly the social historians who study ordinary lives, daily routines, minorities, and the powerless, I wondered how much novelists "keep up" with Canadian history and whether they hold strong views on historical writing.

Mostly, they don't. Bowering acknowledges hardly having read "the big old names, the Carelesses or whoever," and Marlatt says much the same. (Though with some regret. When her son moved to the United States, she worried that he didn't know his roots, his Canadian history — until she realized she has not read much of it either.) Yet both novelists have researched local history extensively. Marlatt has published two books of oral history about Vancouver. Bowering is constantly collecting

pamphlets and copying documents from local museums and historical societies in the Thompson-Okanagan country, and his interest in that region's history is intense.

"I've always loved that country between Kamloops and Osoyoos, but now I see that landscape differently," he says, "now I know the events that went on in those places." He complains that no one ever taught him anything about local history. "I was a history major in school and college," he says, "but I found nothing about British Columbia history. I've personally found more about Okanagan history than I ever knew before, or than my family ever knew."

Douglas Glover, who grew up in Ontario a decade or so after Bowering, doesn't entirely share that view. "I got a lot of history when I was a kid, I think. Of course I ignored it because I was a kid, but it was there." He suspects the complaint about too little history is often produced by cultural politicians or bureaucrats. The detail in his own novel testifies to wide reading in loyalist-era materials, but he too agrees that his researches have been focused and specific. "I'm a novelist, not a scholar. I did lots of research, but I was looking for authentic voice, mostly."

Novelists don't keep up with history writing, it seems, and historians are probably not much different. Cross-fertilization between novelists and historians seems to be limited. Several years ago a novelist, Graeme Gibson, and an historian, David Gagan, simultaneously wrote books about adjacent regions of southern Ontario in the mid-nineteenth century. Each used the image "perpetual motion" to sum up that time and place — and each was oblivious of the other's work. Novels like the ones mentioned here will probably rarely appear on history teachers' lists of source reading.

One reason they won't is the fictional freedom their authors insist on. "This is a work of fiction, not history," declare almost identical sources notes in the books by Glover, Steffler, and Marlatt. Steffler's character floats in time and space, and one of Glover's loyalists mentions the interstate highway that will one day run through the valley, while Marlatt's book is as much about its modern historian as its historical character. "The contemporary historical novel has to be about writing the historical novel, has to be about what history is," Glover declares.

Their freedom to play with "the facts" of history may dismay some scholars, but the novelists' perceptions of why history is important should be reassuring to anyone concerned with history.

The past is with us, says John Steffler. "As a culture we live in the present, we live fast lives, we have turned away from solemn respect for ancestors. So maybe we writers are reminding ourselves, in reaction to that, how the past influences the present, and how the present is influencing what the future will be."

Bowering thinks novels about the past must also be about one's present situation, and he believes the need to know one's own place is what has drawn writers to history, particularly local history. "Everywhere in the world people know their local history more than here." Marlatt thinks she took to history as a source of stability when she first came to Vancouver, after a childhood with a British Empire family that was "all over, everywhere. That's why when I got here I wanted a home, I wanted this to be home."

Asked what it is that distinguishes writing like hers from the conventional costume novel, Marlatt finally observes: "I think the difference is — and maybe I'm wrong to generalize — it's a metaphysical proposition. You ask, how does one live in this world, with all these changes going on? And one reaction to that question is, how did they manage it in the past?

The fiction of writers like Marlatt, Glover, Steffler, and Bowering doesn't read like history, and it doesn't read like the safe, comfortable old historical novel, either. Its writers claim a freedom to imagine and invent, and to rove between present and past, that is sure to trouble those devoted to the footnoted fact as the only way to the past. But their testimony about the importance of the past and to its living presence in modern lives might reassure even the most traditional lover of history.

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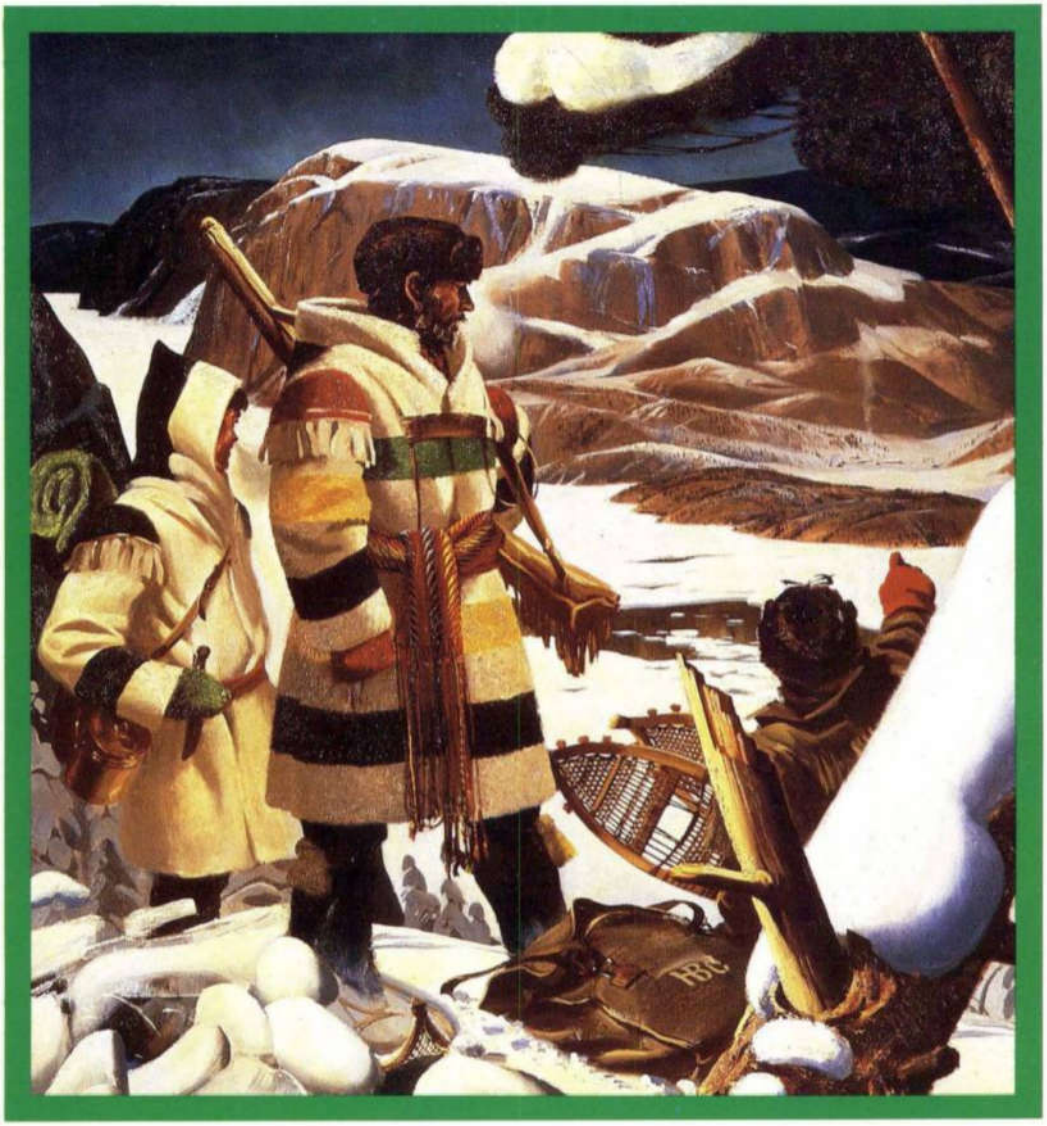

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